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THE CORRIDORS OF TIME

by Poul Anderson



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VOL. 39 NO. 5

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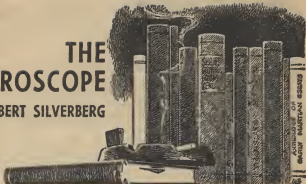
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THE SPECTROSCOPE

By ROBERT SILVERBERG



Darkness and Dawn, by George Allan England. Avalon Books, \$2.95. 191 pages.

This is a cruel resurrection. *Darkness and Dawn*, as Robert A. W. Lowndes notes in his introduction to this edition, is "one of the great early classics of science fiction." It first appeared in 1912 in Frank Munsey's *Cavalier*, and was swiftly followed by two sequels, *Beyond the Great Oblivion* and *The Afterglow*. The three novels were published in a 1914 hardcover volume under the title of *Darkness and Dawn*, and that 672-page tome has long commanded premium prices. About twenty-five years ago, the lamented magazine *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* reprinted the series. Now, apparently, the stories have gone into the public do-

main, and here is Avalon with a new edition of the first of the three novels. At last, modern readers have a chance to savor this legendary monument of paleolithic science fiction.

Which is unfortunate. The monument, to mix a metaphor, is wearing no clothes. This is a terrible, shoddy bit of claptrap by comparison with which the least work of Edgar Rice Burroughs shines like purest gold.

In this great classic something dreadful has happened to the world, and our Anglo-Saxon hero and heroine, Allan Stern and Beatrice Kendrick, awake on the 48th floor of the Metropolitan Tower in New York after a sleep of ages. Everything is covered with dust, and the virginal pair find that their clothes have

(Continued on page 124)



editorial

ACCURATE measurement is a foundation stone of exact science. On page 115 of this issue, Ben Bova has a fascinating lot to say about new methods of star measurement, and what the results will mean to astronomy. But improvements in the exactitudes of measurement are going on in other realms as well.

Five years ago a bar of platinum-iridium alloy served as the International Meter—a world standard of length. The bar, closely guarded, still sits in a vault in the International Bureau of Weights and Measures outside Paris. But it no longer has a function. For the new standard for length is the wavelength of light given off by a lamp containing krypton 86. The krypton lamp is contained in an airtight tank mounted on springs in order to prevent disturbances from earth tremors.

Similarly, the worldwide measurement of time had long been based on the second as defined in

terms of the tropical year 1900. The tropical year, based on equinoxes, differs by some hours from the calendar year. The second was set at $1/31,556,925,9747$ th of that year. But today he have a precise time measurement: the vibration rate of the cesium atom.

The only tangible, material standard of measurement still remaining is a platinum-iridium cylinder known as the International Kilogram—whose custodians so fear that wear and tear may scrape off a milli-ounce that they have permitted it to be used only twice in nearly 80 years. (Weight checks are normally made with duplicates, which makes this observer wonder why we need the original, anyway.)

New efforts are underway to standardize measurements of wave and particle radiation, including neutron radiation. If these succeed, science will have even more precise keys to help unlock the secrets of the universe.

—N.L.



THE CORRIDORS OF TIME

By POUL ANDERSON

First of Two Parts

Beneath the ancient burial mound lay the secrets of the future and the past. And when Malcolm Lockridge let the girl lead him under the earth and into the temporal pathways that webbed the planet, he little knew he would never see his own era again.

JUTLAND is the only part of Denmark which is not sea girt—a peninsula thrusting northward, a land of long hills where farm and town often give way to heath, under a dizzyingly high sky. Once in a while, from the car, Malcolm Lockridge glimpsed dolmens surmounted by rough capstones. He made some remark about them.

"They go back to the Stone Age, as I hope you remember," Storm Darroway said. "Four thousand years and more ago. Their like may be found all down the Atlantic coast and on

through the Mediterranean. That was a strong faith." Her hands tightened on the wheel; she stared straight before her, down the flying ribbon of road. "They adored the Triune Goddess, they who brought those burial rites here, Her of Whom the Norns were only a pallid memory, Malden, Mother, and Hellqueen. It was an evil bargain that traded Her for the Father of Thunders."

Tires hissed on concrete, the split air roared by open windows. Shadows lay deep in folded slopes as the sun fell westward. A flight

of crows winged from a pine-wood. "She will come again," Storm said.

However brief their association, Lockridge had come to expect such passages of darkness through her. She could be merry, too, but even then she remained an enigma; and so did her purpose with him. Had she been less good to look on, he probably wouldn't have accepted her job offer, in spite of the pay.

But slacks and sweater revealed a figure as tall as himself, that might have belonged to Diana the Huntress. Her head was carried high, black hair shining to the shoulders, a face—with all his anthropological training, he couldn't quite tell what part of the world had shaped it. Arched brows over long and tilted green eyes, broad cheekbones, straight nose with slightly flaring nostrils, imperious mouth and chin, tawny complexion—well, she had an American passport, but her low voice spoke English which was too perfect, and she told him she was an agent of an anti-Communist underground.

That accounted for the guns she had instructed him to buy in Copenhagen. It might also account for her telling him to spend three weeks there before they met, familiarizing himself with Danish topography and archeology. When you were to penetrate a forgotten tunnel and recover a

treasure in gold left by the Nazis after the occupation, a treasure of whose existence her organization had only lately learned, antiquarian curiosity was a good excuse in case you were noticed. And afterward he, an American traveling on the cheap, camping out every night, could better smuggle the bullion to Swiss headquarters than some East European.

But still, he hadn't been told much. And now, as they neared their goal, his doubts sharpened.

"Maybe you'd better brief me in detail," he suggested.

"No reason," she said. "I have already reconnoitered. We need expect no trouble at the tunnel entrance. Further along, perhaps—" Intensity flashed forth. She gripped his arm so hard that her fingernails pained him. "Be prepared for surprises. If we meet an emergency, you must not stop to wonder, you must simply react. Do you see?"

"I, I reckon so." He remembered his days on Okinawa, when he was doing a hitch in the Marines, and knew it for good karate psychology. Oh, hell, he realized, I'm committed—to her—whatever happens!"

She sure read me right.

He'd needed the money, of course. What graduate student doesn't? But when she sought him out, after he got back to the States from a field trip to Yuca-

tan where he'd been involved in some hazards that made the papers—well, what had made him enlist in such a damfool, illegal enterprise? His conservative politics? His boyhood on a nearly self-sufficient, backwoods Kentucky farm? Plain restlessness? No, he understood, it had been her overwhelming self.

He sighed and made an effort to relax, letting his eyes travel over the landscape and his lungs drink the cool September air. He didn't look much more like a dashing adventurer than he felt: a stocky, thick-limbed man of medium height, with crew-cut sandy hair, blue eyes, blunt snubnosed features that gave him away as being a mere twenty-six years old. And his attempt didn't succeed. The blood was racing in him.

Not far beyond Holstebro, Storm turned off the pavement. A dirt road snaked west among fields that presently, on the right side, became a timber plantation. She pulled over and stopped the engine. Silence flowed across the world.

LOCKRIDGE stirred. "Shall we—"

"Hush!" Storm's hand chopped at his words. From the glove compartment she took a small thick disc. Colors played oddly over one face. She shifted it about, her head bent between

sable wings of hair to study the hues. He saw her relax. "Very well," she muttered. "We can proceed."

"What is that thing?" Lockridge reached for it.

She didn't hand it over. "An indicator," she said curtly. "Move! The area is safe *now*."

He reminded himself of his resolution to go along with anything she wanted. That seemed to include not asking silly questions. He got out and opened the trunk. Storm unlocked a suitcase of her own. "I assume you have full camp gear in these pack-sacks," she said. He nodded. "Take yours, then. I will carry my own. Load both guns."

Lockridge obeyed with a sharp, not unpleasant prickling in his skin. When the rack was on him, the Webley holstered at his side and the Mauser in his hand, he turned about and saw Storm closing her suitcase again. She had donned a sort of cartridge belt like none he had ever seen before, a thing of darkly shimmering flexible metal whose pouches appeared to seal themselves shut. Hanging on the right, as if by magnetism, was a slim, intricate-barreled thing. Lockridge did a double take. "What kind of pistol is that?"

"No matter." She hefted the disc of colors. "Expect odder sights than this. Lock the car and let us be gone."

They entered the plantation and began walking back, parallel to the road, hidden from it by the ordered ranks of pines. Afternoon light slanted through a sweet pungency and cast sun-speckles on the ground, which was soft with needles underfoot. "I get you," Lockridge said. "We don't want the car to draw attention to where we're headed, if somebody happens by."

"Silence," Storm ordered.

A mile or so beyond, she led the way to the road and across. There a harvested grainfield lay yellow and stubbly, lifting toward a ridge that cut off view of any farmhouse. In the middle stood a hillock topped by yet another dolmen. Storm slipped agilely through the wire fence before Lockridge could help and broke into a trot. Though her pack was not much lighter than his, she was still breathing easily when they reached the knoll and he was a little winded.

She stopped and opened her belt. A tube came out, vaguely resembling a large flashlight with a faceted lens. She took her bearings from the sun and started around the hillock. It was overgrown with grass and brambles; a marker showed that this relic was protected by the government. Feeling naked under the wide empty sky, his pulse thuttering, Lockridge looked at the dolmen as if for some assur-

ance of eternity. Gray and lichen-spotted, the upright stones brooded beneath their heavy roof as they had done since a vanished people raised them to be a tomb for their dead. But the chamber within, he recalled, had once been buried under heaped earth, of which only this mound was left. . . .

Storm halted. "Yes, here." She began to climb the slope.

"Huh? Wait," Lockridge protested. "We've come three-quarters around. Why didn't you go in the other direction?"

For the first time, he saw confusion on her face. "I go widdershins." She uttered a hard laugh. "Habit. Now, stand back."

THEY were halfway up when she stopped. "This place was excavated in 1927," she said. "Only the dolmen was cleared, and there is no further reason for the scientists to come. So we can use it for a gate." She did something to a set of controls on the tube. "We have a rather special way of concealing entrances," she warned. "Do not be too astonished."

A dull light glowed from the lens. The tube hummed and quivered in her grip. A shiver went through the brambles, though there was no wind. Abruptly a circle of earth lifted.

Lifted—straight into the air—ten feet in diameter, twenty

feet thick, a plug of turf and soil hung unsupported before Lockridge's eyes. He sprang aside with a yell.

"Quiet!" Storm rapped. "Get inside. Quick!"

Numbly, he advanced to the hole in the mound. A ramp led down out of sight. He swallowed. The fact that she watched him was what mostly drove him ahead. He went into the hill. She followed. Turning, she adjusted the tube in her hand. The cylinder of earth sank back. He heard a sigh of compression as it fitted itself into place with machined snugness. Simultaneously, a light came on.

From no particular source, he saw in his bewilderment. The ramp was simply the floor of a barrel-vaulted tunnel, a little wider than the door, which sloped before him around a curve. That bore was surfaced overall with a hard, smooth material from which the light poured, a chill white radiance whose shadowlessness made distances hard to judge. The air was fresh, moving, though he saw no ventilators.

He faced Storm and stammered. She put away the tube. Harshness left her. She glided to him, laid a hand on his arm, and smiled. "Poor Malcolm," she murmured. "You will have greater surprises."

"Judas!" he said weakly. "I

hope not!" But her nearness and her touch were, even then, exhilarating. He began to recover his self-possession.

"How the deuce is that done?" he asked. Echoes bounced hollowly around his voice.

"Shh! Not so loud." Storm glanced at her color disc. "No one is here at present, but they may come from below, and sound carries damnably well in these tunnels."

She drew a breath. "If it will make you feel better, I shall explain the principle," she said. "The plug of earth is bound together by an energy web, emanating from a network embedded in these walls. The same network blankets any effects that might occur in a metal detector, a sonic probe, or some other instrument which could otherwise detect this passage. It also refreshes and circulates the air, through molecular porosities. The tube I used to lift the plug is merely a control; the actual power comes likewise from the network."

"But—" Lockridge shook his head. "Impossible. I know that much physics. I mean . . . well, maybe in theory . . . but no such gadget exists in practice."

Her lips bent upward—how close to his! "You are not frightened, are you, Malcolm?"

He squared his shoulders. "No. Let's move."

"Good man," she said, with a

slight, blood-quickenings emphasis on the second word. Releasing him, she led the way down.

"This is only the entrance," she said. "The corridor proper is more than a hundred feet below us."

THEY spiraled into the earth. Lockridge observed that his own stupefaction was gone. Alertness thrummed in him. Storm had done that. My God, he thought, what an adventure.

The passage debouched in a long room, featureless except at the farther wall. There stood a large box or cabinet of the same lustrous, self-closing metal as Storm's belt, and a doorway some ten feet wide and twenty high. Curtained—? No, as he neared Lockridge saw that the veil which filled it, flickering with soft iridescence, every hue his eyes could see and (he suspected) many they could not, was immaterial: a shimmer in space, a mirage, a sheet of living light. The faintest hum came from it, and the air nearby smelled electric.

Storm paused there. Through her clothes he saw how the tall body tensed. His own pistol came out with hers. She glanced at him.

"The corridor is just beyond," she said in a whetted voice. "Now listen. I only hinted to you before that we might have to

fight. But the enemy is everywhere. He may have learned of our place. His agents may even be on the other side of this gate. Are you ready, at my command, to shoot?"

He could only jerk his head up and then down.

"Very well. Follow me."

"No, wait, I'll go—"

"Follow, I said." She bounded through the curtain.

He came after. Crossing the threshold, he felt a brief, twisting shock, and stumbled. He caught himself and glared around.

Storm stood half crouched, peering from side to side. After a minute she glanced at her instrument, and the pistol sank in her hand. "No one," she breathed. "We are safe for the moment."

Lockridge drew a shaky lungful and tried to understand what sort of place he had entered.

The corridor was huge. Also hemicylindrical, with the same luminous surfacing, it must be a hundred feet in diameter. Arrow straight it ran, right and left, until the ends dwindled out of sight—why, it must go for miles, he realized. The humming noise and the lightning smell were more intense here, pervading his being, as if he were caught in some vast machine.

He looked back at the door through which he had come, and stiffened. "What the hell!"

On this side, though no higher, the portal was easily two hundred feet wide. A series of parallel black lines, several inches apart, extended from it, some distance across the corridor floor. At the head of each was a brief inscription, in no alphabet he could recognize. But every ten feet or so a number was added. He saw 4950, 4951, 4952. . . . Only the auroral curtain was the same.

"No time to waste," Storm tugged at his sleeve. "I shall explain later. Get aboard."

She gestured at a curve-fronted platform, not unlike a big metal toboggan with low sides, that hovered two feet off the floor. Several backless benches ran down its length. At the head was a panel where small lights glowed, red, green, blue, yellow—"Come on!"

He mounted with her. She took the front seat, laid her gun in her lap, and passed her hand across the lights. The sled swung around and started left down the corridor. It moved in total silence at a speed he guessed to be thirty miles an hour; but somehow the wind was screened off them.

"What the jumpin' blue blazes is this thing?" he choked.

"You have heard of hovercraft?" Storm said absently. Her eyes kept flickering from the emptiness ahead to the color disc in her fingers.

A grimness came upon Lockridge. "Yes, I have," he said, "and I know this is nothin' like them." He pointed to her instrument. "And what's that?"

She sighed. "A life indicator. And we are riding a gravity sled. Now be still and keep watch to our rear."

LOCKRIDGE felt almost too stiff to sit, but managed it. He set the rifle on the bench beside him. Sweat was clammy along his ribs, and he saw and heard with preternatural sharpness.

They glided by another portal, and another, and another. The gates came at variable intervals, averaging about half a mile, as near as Lockridge could gauge in this saturating cold illumination. Wild thoughts spun through his head. No one on Earth could ever have built this. Beings from another planet, another star, somewhere out in the measureless darkness of the cosmos—

Three men came through a gate that the sled had just passed. Lockridge yelled at the same moment that Storm's indicator turned blood red. She twisted about and looked behind. Her mouth skinned back from her teeth. "So we fight," she said on a trumpet note, and fired aft.

A blinding beam sprang from her pistol. One of the men lurched and collapsed. Smoke

roiled greasy from the hole in his breast. The other two had their guns unfastened before he was down. Storm's firebolt passed across them, broke in a coruscant many-colored fountain, and splashed the corridor walls with vividness. The air crackled. Ozone stung Lockridge's nostrils.

She thumbed a switch on her weapon. The beam winked out. A vague, hissing shimmer encompassed her and her companion. "Energy shielding," she said. "My entire output must go to it, and even so, two beams striking the same spot could break through. Shoot!"

Lockridge had no time to be appalled. He brought the rifle to his cheek and sighted. The man he saw was big but dwindling with distance, only his close-fitting black garments and golden-bronze Roman-like helmet could be made out, he was a target with no face. Briefly there jagged across Lockridge's memory the woods at home, green stillness and a squirrel in branches above. . . . He shot. The bullet smote, the man fell but picked himself up. Both of them sprang onto a gravity sled such as was parked at every gate.

"The energy field slows material objects too," Storm said bleakly. "Your bullet had too little residual velocity, at this range."

The other sled got moving in pursuit. Its black-clad riders hunched low under the bulwarks. Lockridge could just see the tops of their helmets. "We got a lead on them," he said. "They can't go any faster, can they?"

"No, but they will observe where we emerge, go back, and tell Brann," Storm answered. "A mere identification of me will be bad enough." Her eyes were ablaze, nose flared, breasts rising and falling; but she spoke more coolly than he had known men to do when they trained with live ammunition. "We shall have to counterattack. Give me your pistol. When I stand to draw their fire—no, be quiet, I will be shielded—you shoot."

She whipped the sled about and sent it hurtling toward the other one. The thing grew in Lockridge's vision with nightmare slowness. And those were actual men he must kill. He kicked away nausea. They were trying to kill him and Storm, weren't they? He knelt beneath the sideshield and held his rifle ready.

The encounter exploded around him. Storm surged to her feet, the energy gun in her left hand, the Webley barking in her right. Yards away, the other sled veered. Two firebeams struck at her, throwing sparks and sheets of radiance, moving toward convergence. And a slug whined

from some noiseless, stubby-barreled weapon that one of the black-uniformed men also held.

Lockridge jumped up. In the corner of an eye he saw Storm, erect in a geyser of red, blue, yellow flame, hair tossed about her shoulders by thundering energies, shooting and laughing. He looked down upon the enemy, straight into a pale narrow countenance. The bullet gun swiveled toward him. He fired exactly twice.

The other sled passed by and on down the corridor.

Echoes died away. The air lost its sting. There was only the bone-deep song of unknown forces, the smell of them and the flimmer in a gateway.

STORM looked after the sprawled bodies as they departed, picked her life indicator off the bench, and nodded. "You got them," she whispered. "Oh, nobly shot!" She threw down the instrument, seized Lockridge and kissed him with bruising strength.

Before he could react, she let him go and turned the sled around. Her color was still high, but she spoke with utter coolness: "It would be a waste of time and charges to disintegrate them. The Rangers would still know quite well that they met their end at Warden hands. But no more than that should be ob-

vious: provided we get out of the corridor before anyone else chances along."

Lockridge slumped onto a bench and tried to comprehend what had happened.

He didn't come out of his daze until Storm halted the sled and urged him off. She leaned over and activated the controls. It started away. "To its proper station," she explained briefly. "If Brann knew that the killers of his men had entered from 1964, and found an extra conveyance here, he would know the whole story. This way, now."

They approached the gate. Storm chose a line from the first group, headed 1175. "Here you must be careful," she said. "We could easily get lost from each other. Walk exactly on this marker." She reached behind her and closed fingers on his. He was still too shocked to appreciate that as much as he knew, dimly, he would otherwise.

Following her, he passed through the curtain. She let him go, and he saw that they were in a room like the one from which they had entered. Storm opened the cabinet, consulted what he guessed might be a timepiece, and nodded in a satisfied way. Taking out a pair of bundles in a shaggy, coarse-woven brown material, she handed them to him, closed the cabinet and they went up the spiral ramp.

At the end, she opened another turf trapdoor with her control tube, and closed it again behind them. The concealment was perfect.

Lockridge didn't notice. There was too much else.

The sun had still been well above the horizon when they entered the tunnel, and they could not have been inside more than half an hour. But here was night, with a nearly full moon high in the sky. By that wan radiance he saw how the mound-side now covered the dolmen, up to the capstone, with a rude wooden door beneath. Around him, grasses nodded in a chill, moist breeze. No farmlands lay below; the knoll was surrounded by brush and young trees, a second-growth wilderness. To the south a ridge lifted that looked eerily familiar, but it was covered with forest . . . old, those trees, incredibly, impossibly old, he had only seen oaks so big in the last untouched parts of America. Their tops were hoar in the moonlight, and shadows solid beneath.

An owl hooted. A wolf howled.

He raised his eyes again and saw this was not September. That sky belonged to the end of May.

II

YES, of course I lied to you," Storm said.

The campfire guttered high, sparks showered, light danced dull on smoke and picked her strong-boned features out of darkness in Rembrandt hints. Beyond and around, the night crowded close. Lockridge shivered and held his hands toward the coalbed.

"You would not have believed the truth before you saw," Storm went on. "Would you? At the very least, time would have been lost in explanation, and I had already been much too long in the twentieth century. Each hour multiplied my danger. If Brann had thought to guard that Danish gate—He must believe I was killed. There were several other women in my party, and some were mutilated beyond recognition in the fight with him. Nevertheless, he could have gotten wind of me."

Exhausted by reaction, Lockridge said merely, "You are from the future, then?"

She smiled. "So are you, now."

"My future, I mean. When?"

"About two thousand years after your era." Her humor faded, she sighed and looked into the gloom that lay back of him. "Though I have been in so many ages, I am woven into so much history, I sometimes wonder if any of my spirit remains in the year I was born."

"And . . . we're still in the same place as we entered the cor-

ridor, aren't we? But in the past. How far?"

"By your reckoning, the early summer of 1827 B.C. I checked the exact date on a calendar clock in the foreroom. Emergence cannot be precise, because the human body has a finite width equivalent to a couple of months. That was why we had to hold hands, coming through—so we would not be separated by weeks." Briskly: "If such should ever happen, go back into the corridor and wait. Duration occurs there too, but on a different plane, so that we can rendezvous."

Nearly four thousand years, Lockridge thought. On this day Pharaoh sat the throne of Egypt, the sea king of Crete planned trade with Babylon, Mohenjodaro stood proud in the Indus valley, the General Grant Tree was a seedling; bronze was known to the Mediterranean world but northern Europe was neolithic and the dolmen of the knoll had been raised only a few generations ago by folk whose slash-and-burn agriculture exhausted the soil and forced them to move elsewhere; eighteen hundred years before Christ, centuries before even Abraham, he sat camped in a Denmark which those people who called themselves Danes had yet to enter. The strangeness seeped through him like a physical cold. He

fought back the sense and asked:

"What is that corridor, anyway? How does it work?"

"The physics would have no meaning to you," Storm said. "Think of it as a tube of force, whose length has been rotated onto the time axis. Entropy still increases inside; there is temporal flow. But from the viewpoint of one within, cosmic time—outside time—is frozen. By choosing the appropriate gate, one can step out into any corresponding era. The conversion factor—" she frowned in concentration—"in your measurements, would be roughly thirty-five days per foot. Every few centuries there is a portal, twenty-five years wide. The intervals cannot be less than about two hundred years, or the weakened force-field would collapse."

"Does it go clear up to your century?"

"No. This one extends from circa 4000 B.C. to 2000 A.D. It is not feasible to build them much longer. There are many corridors throughout the space-time of this planet, of varying lengths. The gates are made to overlap in time, so that by going from one passage to another a traveler can find any specific year he wishes. For example, to go further pastward than 4000 B.C., we could take corridors I know of in England or China, whose gates also cover this year.

To go futureward beyond the limits of this one, we would have to seek out still other places."

"When were they . . . invented?"

"A century or two before I was born. The struggle between Wardens and Rangers was already intense, so the original purpose of scientific research was largely shunted aside."

WOLVES gave voice in the night. A heavy body went crashing through underbrush and a savage, yelping chorus took up pursuit. "You see," Storm said, "we cannot wage total war. That would cost us Earth."

"You don't know your own future, then?" Lockridge asked with a crawling along his nerves.

The dark head shook. "No. When the activator is turned on to make a new corridor, it drives a shaft equally far in both directions. We ventured ahead of our era. There were guardians who turned us back, with weapons we did not understand. We no longer try. It was too terrible."

The knowledge of mysteries beyond mysteries was not to be endured. Lockridge fled to practicality.

"Okay," he said. "I seem to've enlisted in a war on your side. Do you mind tellin' me what the shootin's fer? Who are your enemies? Who are you?"

"Let me continue to use the name I chose in your century," Storm said. "I believe it was a lucky one." She sat brooding a while. "I do not think you could really grasp the issue of my age. Too much history lies between you and us. Could a man from your past really feel what the basic difference is that divides East and West in your time?"

"I reckon not," Lockridge admitted. "In fact, quite a few of our own don't seem to see it."

"At that," Storm said, "my quarrel is the same. Because there has really only been one, throughout man's existence—however distorted, however confused, always in some fashion the clash between two philosophies. Plan against organic development. Control against freedom. Overriding rationalism against a profound respect for instinct.—What is and what should be the nature of man? There is the issue of battle!"

Her voice dropped. She looked into the forest walling this meadow. "I often think," she said slowly, "that the downward turn started in this very millenium, when the earth gods and their Mother were swept aside by those who worshipped skyward."

She shook herself, as if to be rid of something, and continued in a level tone, "Well, Malcolm, accept for now that the Wardens

are keepers of life—life in its wholeness, boundedness, splendor, and tragedy—while the Rangers would make the world over in the machine's image. It is an oversimplification. I can perhaps explain better to you, later on. But do you find my cause unworthy?"

Lockridge regarded her, where she rested like a young wildcat, and said with a surge that drove out all terror, remorse, and aloneness: "No. I'll go along. I already have."

"Thank you," she whispered. "If you knew what the token meant, not only in words but in your blood, I would leap over the fire to you for that."

What does it mean? he wanted to ask. Dizzily: A man might hope. But before he could speak, Storm grinned and said: "The next few months should be interesting for you."

"Good Lord, yes!" he realized. "Why, any anthropologist would give his right—uh—eye to be here. I still can't believe I am."

"There are dangers," she warned.

"So . . . what is the situation, anyway? What do we have to do?"

"Let me begin at the first," Storm said. "As I told you, the struggle between Rangers and Wardens cannot be fought in our own time on any major scale. Instead, it has moved largely

into the past. Bases are established at strategic points and—No matter now. I knew the Rangers have a stronghold in Harald Bluetooth's reign. Though the Asa religion was already one of Sky Father, still, the introduction of Christianity was another advance for them, laying the foundation for centralized monarchy and the eventual rationalistic state. Thence came the men we met."

"Huh? Wait—you mean you people *change* the past?"

"Oh, no. Never. That is inherently impossible. If one tried, he would find events always frustrated him. What has been, is. We time travelers are ourselves part of the fabric. But let us say that we discover aspects of it which are useful to our respective causes, we get recruits and build up strength for the final contest—

"Well. In my time, the Rangers hold the western hemisphere, the Wardens the eastern. I led a party into the twentieth century and overseas to America. We could not build anything important by ourselves without being observed by enemy agents, who are much more numerous in your age than ours are. But our plan was to organize a company whose ostensible purpose was something unremarkable, to pose as ordinary citizens of the era. We picked yours because that was

the first century in which such items as we needed—transistors, for instance—could be obtained locally and hence inconspicuously. In the guise of a mining enterprise in Colorado, we produced our underground installations, manufactured an activator, and drove a new passage.

"The plan was to strike through it, emerging in our own time, in the Rangers' heartland. But the moment the corridor was finished, Brann came down it with an overwhelmingly superior force. I do not know how he got word. Only I escaped. For more than a year, then, I wandered about in the United States, seeking a way of return. Every futureward corridor would be guarded, I knew, the Rangers being so strong in the Early Industrial civilization. Nowhere could I find a Warden."

"How'd you live?" Lockridge inquired.

"You would call it robbery," Storm said.

He started. She laughed. "This energy gun, which I had with me, can be set to do no more than stun. There was no problem in gathering some thousands of dollars, a few at a time. I was desperate. Can you blame me so very much?"

"I ought to." He looked at her in the firelight. "But I don't."

"I didn't think you would," she said softly. "You are such a one

as I hardly dared hope I could find.

"You see, I needed a helper, a bodyguard, someone to make me appear otherwise than a woman traveling alone. That is too conspicuous in all past ages. And I had to go pastward.

"I ascertained there was no guard on this Danish corridor. It was the only one I dared attempt with a gate open on those decades. Even so, you saw how near we came to destruction.

"But now—here we are. There is a Warden base in Crete, where the old faith is still strong. Unfortunately, I cannot simply call them to come fetch us. The Rangers are also active in this milieu—it is, as I said, a crucial one—and they might too likely intercept the message and find us before our friends can. But once we have reached Knossos, we can get an armed escort, from corridor to corridor until I have reached home. You will be dismissed in your own era." She shrugged. "I left a good many dollars hidden in the United States. You may as well have them for your trouble."

"Skip that," Lockridge said roughly. "How do we get to Crete?"

"By sea. There has long been trade between these parts and the Mediterranean. The Limfjord is not far away, and a ship from Iberia, which is under the reli-

gion of the megalith builders, should call sometime this summer. From Iberia we can transship. It should take no longer, and is less hazardous, than following the amber route overland."

"M-m-m . . . okay, sounds reasonable. And I suppose we have enough metal on us to buy passage. Or do we?"

Storm tossed her head. "If not," she said haughtily, "they will not refuse to carry Her Whom they worship."

"What?" Lockridge's mouth fell open. "You mean you can pose as—"

"No," she said. "I am the Goddess."

III

WHITE sunrise mists rolled low across a drenched earth. Water dripped from a thousand leaves, glittered in the air and was lost in brush and bracken. The woods were clamorous with birdsong. High overhead wheeled an eagle, the young light like gold on its wings.

Lockridge woke to a hand shaking him and blinked sandy lids. "Huh? Whuh—No—" Yesterday had drained him, he was stiff and dull in the head, aching in his muscles. He looked into Storm's face and fumbled to recognize her, to know and accept what had happened.

"Rise," she said. "I have started the fire again. You will prepare breakfast."

Only then did he see how she was dressed: in leather sandals, a birdskin headband, a fur purse, a necklace of raw amber, and a brief bast skirt. He sat up in his sleeping bag with a choked-off oath of amazement, delight, and—awe was perhaps the word. He had not known the human body could be so beautiful.

Yet his instinctive reaction died at once. It was not simply that she paid him no more attention than if he had been another woman, or a dog. It was that one does not, cannot make passes at Nike of Samothrace.

She pointed to a bundle from the cabinet. "There are your contemporary clothes," she said. "Put them on."

He could not resent her ordering him about. The wrapping proved to be a short cloak of loosely woven wool, blue from some vegetable dye, with a thorn brooch. The main garment was a sleeveless bast tunic that he pulled over his head and belted with a thong. Footgear, fillet, and a leafshaped dagger of flint so finely worked as to look almost metallic, completed the male garb.

"You will do," Storm said. "We are dressed like well-to-do clanfolk of the Tenil Orugaray, the Sea People, the aborigines.

Details don't matter. We will be travelers who had to purchase our clothes locally when the old ones wore out." She opened a little box that had also been in the bundle. Within lay a tiny, transparent globule. "Put this in an ear."

Throwing aside a midnight lock of hair, she demonstrated with a similar object. He noticed that she already wore one on her left. His own did not impair his hearing, but felt oddly cool, and a momentary tingle ran over his scalp and down his neck.

"Do you understand me?" Storm asked.

"Why, naturally—" He strangled on the words. They had not been in English.

Not in anything!

Storm laughed. "Take good care of your *diaglossa*. You will find it rather more valuable than gun."

LOCKRIDGE wrenched his mind back to observation and reason. What had she actually said? *Gun* had been English and *diaglossa* didn't fit the pattern of the rest. Which was—Gradually, as he used the language, he found it to be agglutinative, with a complex grammar and many fine distinctions unknown to civilized man. There were, for instance, some twenty different words for water, depending on what kind might be

involved under what circumstances. On the other hand, he was unable to express in it such concepts as "mass," "government," or "monotheism": at least, not without the most elaborate circumlocutions. Only slowly, in the days that followed, did he notice how different from his own were notions like "cause," "time," "self," and "death."

"The device is a molecular encoder," Storm said in English. "It stores the important languages and basic customs of an era and an area—in this case, northern Europe from what will someday be Ireland to what will be Esthonia, plus some outside ones that might be encountered like Iberian and Cretan. It draws energy from body heat, and meshes its output with the nerve flow of the brain. In effect, you have an artificial memory center added to your natural one."

"All that, in this cotton-pick-in' little thing?" Lockridge asked weakly.

Storm's wide smooth shoulders rose and fell. "A chromosome is smaller, and carries more information. Make us some food."

The bundles included metal-sealed stuff unfamiliar to him, but delicious after he had warmed it. Storm prowled the meadow, lost in her own thoughts, while he cooked. She paid the chill no heed. Is she hu-

man? he wondered. After everything we've been through, not a trace o' strain—Superhuman. She made some mention last night o' genetic control. They've created the man beyond man, off in the future. No wonder she can be a goddess in Crete.

Either there was a stimulant in the food, or motion worked the stiffness out of him. When he raked the fire apart and covered the ashes with dirt, and Storm said smiling, "Good, you know how to care for the land," he felt ready to fight bears.

She showed him how to operate the gate control tube and hid it in a hollow tree along with their twentieth century clothes. The guns they kept, and some iron objects that would be princely gifts in this era. Then they assembled their packs, put them on, and started.

"We are going to Avildaro," Storm said. "I have never been there myself, but it is a port of call, and if a ship does not happen by it this year, we will hear where else."

Lockridge knew, from the thing in his ear, that the dwellers in that village were hunters, fishers, and, on a small scale, farmers; that they worshipped the Mother; that of late the chariot folk, who knew Her not but sacrificed to male gods, had arrived to trouble a long peace—He stopped summoning those

ghostly memories that were not his. They blinded him to the day and the woman beside him.

At the edge of the primeval forest, Storm found a trail and they began walking north. Life swarmed about, briar and bramble, fern and fungus, moss and mistletoe crowding around the oaks; butterflies splashed the air with saffron, squirrels ran over the branches like streaks of fire, a hundred kinds of bird were nesting. Song and chatter and wingbeat reverberated down the leafy arches, more distantly grouse drummed, a wild pig grunted, an aurochs challenged all earth. Lockridge felt his spirit expand with sun and breeze and the breath of flowers. If Storm guards this, he thought, sure, I'm with her.

SHE said nothing for the next hour, and he felt no need himself to talk. That would have taken his mind off the sight of her, panther-gaited at his side, the light that was blue-black in her hair, malachite in her eyes, tawny down her skin until it lost itself in shadow between her breasts. By midmorning they had emerged in open country, wide and flat, where grass rippled, isolated coppices soughed, light and shade ran beneath the clouds. The trail broadened, grew muddy, and wound off past a bog.

At that place, abruptly, Storm

halted. The muscles stretched tight in her belly and she dropped a hand to her pistol. Lockridge saw wheel tracks and the marks of unshod hoofs in the damp ground.

"The Yuthoaz," Storm muttered. She pronounced the name with an umlauted *u* and an *edh*. From the diaglossa Lockridge knew that this was what the local tribes of the Battle Ax culture called themselves. And the Ax of those sun-worshipping invaders was not the tree-felling Labrys: it was a tomahawk.

Storm scowled. "The available information is too scanty," she complained. "No one thought this station important enough to warrant intensive scouting. We don't know what is going to happen here this year."

After a moment, musingly: "However, reconnaissance certainly established that no large-scale use of energy devices occurred in this area during this entire millennium. That is one reason I chose to go so far back, rather than leave the corridor at a later date when the Wardens are also operating. I *know* the Rangers are not coming here. Thus I dared leave the corridor in the first year of this gate; it will be accessible for a quarter century. And—yes, another datum, a report recorded from a survey party out of Ireland, whose time portals are a century

out of phase with Denmark's—Avildaro still stands, has even grown to importance, a hundred years hence." She shifted her pack and resumed walking. "So we have little to fear. At most, we may find ourselves involved in a skirmish between two Stone Age bands."

Lockridge fell into step with her. A couple of miles went by in footfalls through the blowing grass, among the scattered groves. Save for an occasional giant, spared because it was holy, these coastal trees were not oak but ash, elm, pine, and especially beech, another tall invader that had begun to encroach on Jutland.

As the trail rounded such a stand, Lockridge saw a goat flock some distance off. Two pre-adolescent boys, naked, sun-darkened, with shocks of bleached hair, were keeping watch. One played a bone flute, another dangled his legs from a branch. But when they spied the newcomers, a yell rose from them. The first boy pelted down the trail, the second rocketed up the tree and vanished in leafage.

Storm nodded. "Yes, they have some reason to fear trouble. Matters were not so before."

Lockridge pseudo-remembered what life had been for the Tenil Orugaray: peace, hospitality, bouts of hard work separated by long easy intervals when one

practiced the arts of ambershaping, music, dance, love, the chase, and simple idleness; only the friendliest rivalry between the fisher settlements scattered along this coast, whose people were all intricately related anyway; only contact for trade with the full-time farmers inland. Not that these folk were weaklings. They hunted wisent, bear, and wild boar, broke new ground with pointed sticks, dragged rocks cross country to build their dolmens and the still bigger, more modern passage graves; they survived winters when gales drove sleet and snow and the sea itself out of the west against them; their skin boats pursued seal and porpoise beyond the bay, which was open in this era, and often crossed the North Sea to trade in England or Flanders. But nothing like war—hardly ever even murder—had been known until the chariot drivers arrived.

"Storm," he asked slowly, "did you start the cult of the Goddess to get the idea of peace into men?"

Her nostrils dilated and she spoke almost in scorn. "The Goddess is triune: Maiden, Mother, and Queen of Death." Jarred, he heard the rest dimly. "Life has its terrible side. How well do you think those weak-tea-and-social-work clubs you call Protestant churches will survive what lies

ahead for your age? In the bull dance of Crete, those who die are considered sacrifices to the Powers. The megalith builders of Denmark—not here, where the faith has entered a still older culture, but elsewhere—kill and eat a man each year." She observed his shock, smiled, and patted his hand. "Don't take it so hard, Malcolm. I had to use what human material there was. And war for abstractions like power, plunder, glory, that is alien to Her."

He could not argue, could do no more than accept, when she addressed him thus. But he remained silent for a half hour.

BY that time they were among fields. Guarded by thorn fences, emmer, spelt, and barley had just begun to sprout, misty green over the dark earth. Just a few score acres were under cultivation, and the women who might ordinarily have been out weeding were not in sight. Otherwise, unfenced pastures reached on either hand. Ahead blinked the bright sheet of the Limfjord. A grove hid the village, but smoke rose above.

Several men jogtrotted thence. They were big-boned and fair, clad similarly to Lockridge, their hair braided and beards haggled short. Some had wicker shields, vividly painted. Their weapons were flint-tipped spears, bows, daggers, and slings.

Storm halted and raised empty hands. Lockridge did likewise. Seeing the gesture and the dress, the village men eased off noticeably. But as they approached, an uncertainty came over them. They shuffled their feet, dropped their eyes, and finally stopped.

They don't know exactly who or what she is, Lockridge thought, but there's always that about her—

"In every name of Her," Storm said, "we come friends."

The leader gathered courage and advanced. He was a heavy-set, grizzled man, face weathered and eyes crow-footed by a lifetime at sea. His necklace included a pair of walrus tusks, and a bracelet of trade copper gleamed on one burly wrist. "Then in Her names," he rumbled, "and in mine, Echegon whose mother was Ularu and who leads in council, be you welcome."

With a fraction of his awareness, Lockridge listened to Storm's explanation as the party walked shoreward. She and her companion were travelers from the South (the far-off exotic South whence all wonders came—but about which the shrewder men were surprisingly well-informed) who had gotten separated from their party. They wished to abide in Avildaro until they could get passage home. Once established, she hinted, they would make rich gifts.

The fishermen relaxed still more. If this was a goddess and her attendant wandering incognito, at least they proposed to act like ordinary human beings. And their stories would enliven many an evening; envious visitors would come from miles around, to hear and see and bring home the importance of Avildaro; their presence might influence the Yuthoaz, whose scouts had lately been observed, to keep away. The group entered the village with much boisterous talk and merriment.

IV

AURI, whose name meant Flower Feather, had said: "Do you truly wish to see the fowl marshes? I could be your guide."

Lockridge had rubbed his chin, where the bristles were now a short beard, and glanced at Echegon. He expected anything from shocked disapproval to an indulgent chuckle. Instead, the headman fairly leaped at the chance, almost pathetically eager to send his daughter on a picnic with his guest. Lockridge wasn't sure why.

Storm refused an invitation to join them, to Auri's evident relief. The girl was more than a little frightened of the dark woman who held herself so aloof and spent so much time alone in the forest. Storm admitted to

Lockridge that this was as much to confirm her own *mana* in the eyes of the tribe as for any other reason; but she seemed to have withdrawn from him too, he had not seen a lot of her during the week and a half they had dwelt in Avildaro. Though he was too fascinated by what he experienced to feel deeply hurt, it had nonetheless driven home to him what a gulf there was between them.

Now, as the sun declined, he dug in his paddle and sent the canoe homeward. This was not one of the big coracles which went outside the Limfjord, but merely a light dugout with wicker bulwarks, calling for no more care than a green branch tied at the bow to keep the gods of the wet under control.

Still, reedy, but aswarm with ducks, geese, swans, storks, herons, the marsh fell behind. Lockridge paralleled the southern bayshore, which sloped in a greenness turned gold by the long light. On his left, the water shimmered to the horizon, disturbed only by a few circling gulls and the occasional leap of a fish. So quiet was the air that those remote sounds came almost as clear as the swirl and drip from his paddle. He caught a mingled smell of earth and salt, forest and kelp. The sky arched cloudless, deeply blue, darkening toward evening above Auri's head where she sat in the bows.

Whoof! Lockridge thought. A nice day, but am I glad to be out of those mosquitoes! They didn't bother her none . . . well, I reckon these natives get bit so often they develop immunity.

His itches weren't too bad, though, not even the unsatisfiable itch for a cigaret; and what he felt was compensated for by the sense of water turned alive by his strokes and the rubbery resurgence in his muscles. Also, of course, by having a pretty girl along.

"Did you find pleasure in the day?" she asked shyly.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Thanks so much for taking me."

She looked astonished, and he recalled that the Tenil Orugaray, like the Navajo, spoke thanks only for very great favors. Everyday helpfulness was taken for granted. The diaglossa made him fluent in their language but didn't override established habits.

Color stained her face and throat and bare young bosom. She dropped her eyes and murmured, "No, I must thank you."

He considered her. They didn't keep track of birthdays here, but Auri was so slim, with such an endearing coltishness in her movements, that he supposed she was about fifteen. At that, he wondered why she was still a virgin. Other girls, wedded or not, enjoyed even younger a Samoan sort of liberty.

Naturally, he wouldn't dream of jeopardizing his position here by getting forward with the sole surviving female child in his host's house. More important yet was honor—and inhibition, no doubt. He'd already refused the advances of some he felt were too young; they had plenty of older sisters. Auri's innocence came to him like a breeze from the hawthorns flowering behind her home.

He must admit being a wee bit tempted. She was cute: immense blue eyes, freckle-dusted snub nose, soft mouth, the unbound hair of a maiden flowing in flaxen waves from under a garland of primroses and down her back. And she hung around him in the village to a downright embarrassing extent. However.

"You have nothing to thank me for, Auri," Lockridge said. "You and yours have shown me more kindness than I deserve."

"No, but much!" she protested. "You bless me."

"How so? I have done nothing."

Her fingers twisted together and she looked into her lap. It was so difficult for her to explain that he wished he hadn't asked, but he couldn't think of a way to stop her.

THE story was simple. Among the Tenil Orugaray a maiden was sacred, inviolable. But when

she herself felt the time had come, she named a man to initiate her at the spring sowing festival, a tender and awesome rite. Auri's chosen had drowned at sea a few days before their moment. Clearly the Powers were angry, and the Wise Woman decided that, in addition to being purified, she must remain alone until the curse was somehow removed. That was more than a year ago.

It was a serious matter for her father (or, at least, the head of her household; paternity was anyone's guess in this culture)—and, he being headman, for the tribe. While no women who were not grandmothers sat in council, the sexes had essentially equal rights, and descent was matrilineal. If Auri died childless, what became of the inheritance? As for herself, she was not precisely shunned, but there had been a bitter year of being left out of almost everything.

When the strangers came, bearing unheard-of marvels and bestowing some as gifts, that appeared to be a sign. The Wise Woman cast beech chips in the darkness of her hut and told Echegon that this was indeed so. Great and unknown Powers indwelt in The Storm and her (Her?) attendant Malcolm. By favoring Echegon's house, they drew off evil. Today, when Malcolm himself had not scorned to

go out on the ever-treacherous water with Auri—

"You could not stay?" she pleaded. "If you honored me next spring, I would be . . . more than a woman. The curse would change to a blessing upon me."

His cheeks burned. "I'm sorry," he said, as kindly as might be. "We cannot wait, but must begone with the first ship."

She bent her head and caught her lip between white teeth.

"But I shall certainly see that the ban is removed," he promised. "Tomorrow I will confer with the Wise Woman. Between us, she and I can doubtless find a way."

Auri wiped away some tears and gave him an uncertain smile. "Thank you. I still wish you could remain—or come back in spring?—but if you give me my life again—" She gulped. "There are no words to thank you for that."

How cheaply one became a god.

TRYING to put her at ease, he turned the talk to matters which were commonplace for her. She was so surprised that he should ask about pottery-making, which was woman's work, that she quite forgot her troubles: especially since she was reckoned good at fashioning the handsome ware he had admired. It led her to remember the amber har-

vest—"When we go out after a storm," she said breathlessly, eyes alight, "the whole people, out on the dunes to gather what has washed ashore . . . oh, then is a merry time, and the fish and oysters we bake! Why do you not raise a storm while you are here, Malcolm, so you may have the fun too? I will show you a place I know where the gulls come to your hand for food, and we will swim in the breakers after floating chunks, and, and everything!"

"I fear the weather is beyond my control," he said. "I am only a man, Auri. I have some powers, yes, but they are not really great."

"I think you can do everything."

"Uh . . . um . . . this amber. You gather it mostly for trade, do you not?"

The bright head nodded. "The inlanders want it, and the folk beyond the westward sea, and the ship people from the South. If the ship calls somewhere else than Avildaro this year, may I go with you to see it?"

"Well . . . surely, if no one objects."

"I would like to go with you to the South," she said wistfully.

He thought of her in a Cretan slave market, or puzzled and lost in his own world of machines, and sighed. "No, that cannot be. I'm sorry."

"I knew it." Her tone was quiet, with no trace of self-pity. One learned in the Neolithic to accept what was.

Though there were worse milieus than this, Lockridge reflected. He looked at her, where she sat supple and sun-browned with one hand trailing in the clucking water. Yes, much worse.

"You think deeply," she said in a timid voice.

He started and missed a stroke. Clear drops showered from the paddle, agleam in the level light. "Why, no," he said. "I was only wandering."

Again he had misused the idiom. The spirit that wandered, in thought or in dream, could enter strange realms. She regarded him with reverence. After a while when nothing but the canoe's passage and the far-off cries of homing geese broke the stillness, she asked low, "May I call you Lynx?"

He blinked.

"I do not understand your name Malcolm," she explained. "So it is a strong magic, too strong for me. But you are like a big golden lynx."

"Why—why—" However childish, the gesture touched him. "If you want. But I don't think Flower Feather could be bettered."

Auri flushed and looked away. They continued in silence.

And the silence lengthened.

Gradually Lockridge grew aware of that. Ordinarily, this near the village, there was plenty of noise: children shouting at their games, fishermen hailing the shore as they approached, housewives gossiping, perhaps the triumphant song of hunters who had bagged an elk. But he turned right and paddled up the cove between narrowing wooded banks, and no human voice reached him. He glanced at Auri. Maybe she knew what was afoot. She sat chin in hand, gazing at him, oblivious to everything else. He hadn't the heart to speak. Instead, he sent the canoe forward as fast as he was able.

Avildaro came in sight. Under the ancient shaw at its back, it was a cluster of sod-roofed wattle huts around the Long House of ceremony, which was a more elaborate half-timbered peat structure. Boats were drawn onto the beach, where nets dried on poles. Several hundred yards off stood the kitchen midden. The Tenil Orugaray no longer lived at the very foot of that mound of oyster shells, bones, and other trash, as their ancestors had done; but they carried the offal there, for the half-tame pigs to eat, and the site was veiled with flies.

Auri came out of her trance. The clear brow wrinkled. "But no one is about!" she said.

"There must be someone in the Long House," Lockridge an-

swered. Smoke curled from the venthole in its roof. "We had better go see." He was glad of the Webley at his hip.

HE pulled the canoe ashore, with the girl's help, and made fast. Her hand stole into his as they entered the village. Shadows darkened the dusty paths between huts, and the air seemed suddenly cold. "What does this mean?" she begged of him.

"If you don't know—" He lengthened his stride.

Noise certainly buzzed from the hall. Two young men stood guard outside. "Here they come!" one of them shouted. Both dipped their spears to Lockridge.

He went through the skin-curtained door with Auri. His eyes needed a while to adapt to the gloom within; there were no windows, and the smoke that didn't escape stung. The holy fire in the central pit had been stoked up until the flames danced and crackled, throwing uneasy flickers across sooted walls and pillars roughly hewn with magical symbols. The whole population was crowded in: some four hundred men, women, and children squatting on the dirt floor, mumbling to each other.

Echegon and his chief counselors stood near the fire with Storm. When Lockridge saw her,

tall and arrogant, he forgot about Auri and went to her. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"The Yuthoaz are coming," she said.

He spent a minute assimilating what the diaglossa associated with that name. The Battle Ax people; the northward-thrusting edge of that huge wave, more cultural than racial, of Indo-European-speaking warriors which had been spreading from southern Russia in the past century or two. Elsewhere they were destined to topple civilizations: India, Crete, Hatti, Greece would go down in ruin before them, and their languages and religions and ways of life would shape all Europe. But hitherto, in sparsely populated Scandinavia, there had not been great conflict between the native hunters, fishers, and farmers, and the chariot-driving immigrant herdsmen.

Still, Avildaro had heard of bloody clashes to the east.

Echegon hugged Auri to him for a moment before he said: "I had not too much fear for you, under Malcolm's protection. But I thank Her that you are back." The strong, bearded visage turned to Lockridge. "Today," he said, "men hunting southward hastened home with word that the Yuthoaz are moving against us and will be here tomorrow. They are plainly a war band, nothing but armed men, and

Avildaro is the first village on their way. What have we done to offend them or the gods?"

Lockridge glanced at Storm. "Well," he said in English, "I kind of hate to use our weapons on those poor devils, but if we've got to—"

She shook her head. "No. The energies might be detected. Or, at least, the story might reach Ranger agents and alert them to us. Best that you and I take refuge elsewhere."

"What? But—but—"

"Remember," she said, "time is immutable. Since this place survives a hundred years from now, quite likely the natives will repel the attack tomorrow."

He could not break free of her eyes; but Auri's were on him too, and Echegon's, and his boat-mates' and girl friends' and the flintsmith's and everyone's. He squared his shoulders. "Maybe they didn't, either," he said. "Maybe they're conquered underlings in the future, or would be except for us. I'm stayin'."

"You dare—" Storm checked herself. A moment she stood taut and still. Then she smiled, reached out and stroked his cheek. "I might have known," she said. "Very well, I shall stay too."

V

THEY came west across the meadows, the oak forest on

their left, and the men of Avildaro stood to meet them. They numbered perhaps a hundred in all, with ten chariots, the rest loping on foot: no more than their opponents. When first he squinted through the brilliant noontide, Lockridge could hardly believe that these were the dreaded men of the Battle Ax.

As they neared, he studied one who was typical. In body the warrior was not very different from the Tenil Orugaray: somewhat shorter and stockier, his brown hair twisted into a queue and his beard into a fork, his countenance more Central European than Russian in its beak-nosed harshness. He wore a jerkin and knee-length skirt of leather, a clan symbol burned in, carried a round bullhide shield painted with the fylfot, and had for weapons a flint dagger and a beautifully fashioned stone ax. His lips were drawn wide in carnivore anticipation.

The chariot he followed, evidently his chieftain's, was a light two-wheeled affair of wood and wicker, pulled by four unkempt little horses. A young boy, unarmed and clad merely in a loin-cloth, guided them. Behind him stood the master: bigger than most, wielding an ax so long and heavy it was a halberd, with two spears racked ready to hand. The chief had a helmet, corselet, and greaves of reinforced leath-

er; a short bronze sword hung at his waist, a faded cloak of linen from the South fluttered off his shoulders, and a necklace of massy gold flashed beneath his shaggy chin.

Such were the Yuthoaz. When they saw the uneven line of fishermen, they slowed their pace. Then the lead charioteer winded a bison horn, the troop howled wolfish war-cries, and the horses thudded into gallop. After them banged the wagons, leaped the yelping footmen, boomed the axes on drumhead shields.

Echegon's gaze pleaded with Storm and Lockridge. "Now?" he asked.

"A little longer. Let them get close." Storm shaded her eyes and peered. "Something about him in the rear—the others block my view—"

Lockridge could sense the tension at his back: sighs and mutters, feet that shifted, the acrid stink of sweat. Those were not cowards who waited to guard their homes. But the enemy was equipped and trained for war; and even to him, who had known tanks, the charge of the chariots grew terrifying as they swelled before his eyes.

He brought up his rifle. The stock was cool and hard along his cheek. Storm had grudgingly agreed to let the twentieth century guns be used today. And perhaps the fact they were about

to witness lightnings, even on their own behalf, stretched thin the courage of the Tenil Orugay.

"Better let me start shootin'," he said in English.

"Not yet!" Storm spoke so sharply, above the racket, that he gave her a glance. The feline eyes were narrowed, the teeth, revealed, and one hand rested on the energy pistol she had said she would not employ. "I have to see that one man first."

THE charioteer in the van lifted his ax and swept it down again. Archers and slingers at the rear of the Yuthoaz halted, their weapons leaped clear, stones and flintheaded arrows whistled toward the seafolk.

"Shoot!" Echegon bellowed. He need not have done so. A snarl of defiance and a ragged volley lifted from his line.

At this range, no harm was done. Lockridge saw a missile or two thunk against a shield. But the Yuthoaz were in full career. They'd be on him in another minute. He could make out the flared nostrils and white-rimmed eyes of the nearest horses, blowing manes, flickering whips— a beardless driver and the savage grin that split the beard behind, an ax upraised whose stone gleamed like metal— "To hell with this!" he cried. "I want 'em to know what hit 'em!"

He got that chieftain in his sights and squeezed trigger. The gun kicked back with a solidity that strengthened his soul. Its bang was lost in yells, hoofbeats, squeal of axles and rattle of wheels. But the target flung his arms wide and fell to earth. The halberd soared through an arc. The grass hid man and weapon alike.

The boy reined in, drop-jawed and scared. Lockridge realized at once that he needn't kill humans, swung around and went for the next team of horses. *Crack! Crack!* One animal per bunch would do, to put a wagon out of commission. A stone glanced off the gun barrel, which rang. But the second chariot went over, harness tangled, tongue snapped across, left wheel demolished in the wreck. The live horses reared and neighed their fear.

Lockridge saw the charge waver. Two or three more of those battle cars stopped, and the invaders would bolt. He stepped forward to be in plain sight, his blood too much athrum for him to care about arrows, and let the sun flash off his metal.

The sun itself struck him.

Thunder exploded in his skull. Blinded, shattered, he whirled into night.

Awareness returned with a hurricane of anguish. Light-spots still clouded his vision. Through screams, whinnies, rum-

bling and booming, he heard the shout: "*Forward, Yuthoaz! Forward with Sky Father!*"

It was in a language the diaglossa knew, but not the Tenil Orugaray.

He groped to hands and knees. The first thing he saw was his rifle, half melted on the ground. That destruction had absorbed most of the energy beam. The cartridges had not gone off in the chamber, nor had he himself suffered worse than a vicious burn on face and chest. But fire was in his skin. He could not think for the torment.

A dead man lay nearby. Little remained of the features except charred meat and bone. The copper band on one arm identified Echegon.

Storm stood close by. Her own weapon was out to make a shield. Brief rainbow fountains of flame played around her. The enemy beam passed on, to sickle down three young men who had gone sealing with Lockridge.

The Yuthoaz roared! In one tide, they swept over the villagers. Lockridge saw a son of Echegon—unmistakable, that countenance and that doggedness—ground his spear as if the horses earthquaking down upon him were a wild boar. Their driver swerved them. The chariot clattered past. The warrior who stood in it swung his ax with dreadful skill. Brains spurted.

Echegon's son fell by his father. The Yutho hooted mirth, chopped on the other side at someone Lockridge couldn't see, hurled a spear at an archer, and was gone by.

Elsewhere, the village men were in flight. Panic had them, and they wailed as they ran into the forest. Pursuit ended there. The Yuthoaz, whose patron gods were in the sky, did not like those rustling twilit reaches. They turned back to dispatch and scalp any wounded of their enemy.

One chariot rushed toward Storm. Her energy shield made her lioness form shimmer; in Lockridge's delirium it was as if he watched a myth. He had the Webley too. He fumbled for it, but consciousness left him before he got the weapon loose. His last sight was of the one who stood back of the driver—no Yutho—a man beardless and white-skinned, immensely tall, in a hooded black cloak that flapped after him like wings—

LOCKRIDGE awoke slowly. For a while he was content to lie on the earth and know he was free from pain.

Piece by piece, there came to him what had happened. When he heard a woman scream, he opened his eyes and sat bolt upright.

The sun was down, but

through the doorway of the hut where he was, past the shore and the bloodily shining Limfjord, he glimpsed clouds still lit. The single room here had been stripped of its poor possessions and the entrance was barred with branches lashed together and fastened to the doorposts by thongs. Beyond, two Yuthoaz stood guard. One kept glancing inside and fingering a sprig of mistletoe against witchcraft. His mate's eyes rested enviously on a pair of warriors who drove several cows along the beach. Elsewhere was tumult, deep-throated male shouts and guffaws, tramp of horses and clatter of wheels, while the conquered keened their grief.

"How are you, Malcolm?"

Lockridge twisted his head around. Storm Darroway knelt beside him. He could see her as little more than another shadow in the murky cabin, but he caught the fragrance of her hair, her hands moved softly across him and she sounded more anxious than he had ever heard her before.

"Alive . . . I reckon." He touched fingers to face and breast, where some grease had been smeared. "Doesn't hurt. I—I actually feel rested."

"You were lucky that Brann had antishock drug and ensymatic ointment with him, and decided to save you," Storm said.

"Your burns will be healed by tomorrow." She paused, then—her tone might almost have been Auri's: "So I am also lucky."

"What's goin' on out there?"

"The Yuthoaz are plundering Avildaro."

"Women—kids—no!" Lockridge struggled to stand.

She pulled him down. "Save your strength."

"But those devils—"

She said with a touch of her old sharpness: "At the moment, your female friends do not suffer greatly. Remember the local mores." Empathy returned. "But of course they mourn for those they love, dead or fled, and they will be slaves. . . . No, wait. This isn't the South. A barbarian's slave does not live so very differently from the barbarian himself. She suffers—unfreedom, yes, homesickness, the fact that no woman whatsoever has the respect among the Inco-Europeans that she had in this place. But spare your pity for later. You and I are in worse trouble than your little companion of yesterday."

"M-m-m, okay." He subsided. "What went wrong?"

She moved around to sit on the floor in front of him, hugged her knees, and let the breath whistle out between her lips. "I was a *slogg*," she said bitterly. "I never imagined Brann was in this age. He organized the attack."

He felt the shaken self-accusation in her, reached out and said, "You couldn't have known."

Her fingers hugged his. They went limp again and she said in a winter voice: "There are no excuses for a Warden who fails. There is only the failure."

Because that was the code of the service whose uniform he had worn, he thought suddenly that he understood her and they had become one. He drew her to him as he might have drawn his sister in her sorrow, and she laid her head on his shoulder and clung tight.

After a while, when darkness was nigh absolute, she pulled herself gently free and breathed, "Thank you." They sat side by side now, hands clasped.

She said low and fast: "You must realize the numbers in this war through time are not large. With powers such as a single person may wield, they cannot be. Brann is—you have no word. A crucial figure. Though he must take the field himself, because so few are able, he is a commander, a maker of planet-shaking decisions, a . . . king. And I am as great a prize. And he has me."

"I do not know how he learned where and when I was. I cannot imagine. If he could not find me in your century, how could he hound me down to this forgotten moment? It frightens me, Malcolm." Her clasp was cold and

close around his. "What contortion in time itself has he made?"

"He is here alone. But no more were needed. I think he must have come out of the tunnel under the dolmen earlier than we did, sought the Battle Ax people, and made himself their god. That would not be hard to do. This whole inwandering of the Indo-Europeans—Dyaush Pitar's, Sky Father's, the sun's worshippers, herdsmen, weaponmakers, charioteers, warriors, the men of clever hands and limitless dreams, whose wives are underlings and whose children are property—this was engineered by the Rangers. Do you understand? The invaders are the destroyers of the old civilizations, the old faith; they are the ancestors of the machine people. The Yuthoaz *belong* to Brann. He need but appear among them, as I need but appear in Avildaro or Crete, and in their dim way they will know what he is and he will know how to control them.

"Somehow he learned we were here. He could have brought his full force against us. But that might have warned our agents, who are still strong in this millennium, and led to uncontrollable events. Instead, he told the Yuthoaz to fall on Avildaro, swore the sun and the lightning would fight with them, and swore truly.

"Having won—Lockridge felt

her shudder—"he will send for a certain few of his people, and what else he needs, to work on me."

He held her close. Her whisper was frantic in his ear: "Listen. You may get a chance to escape. Who knows? The book of time was written when first the universe exploded outward; but we have not yet turned over the next leaf. Brann will take you for a mere hireling. He may see no danger in you. If you can—if you can—go up the corridor. Seek out Herr Jesper Fledelius in Viborg, at the Inn of the Golden Lion, on an All Hallows Eve in the years from 1521 to 1541. Can you remember that? He is one of us. Can you but reach him, perhaps, perhaps—"

"Yes. Sure. If." Lockridge did not want to speak further. In an hour or two she could explain. But right now she was so alone. He reached around with his free hand to clasp her shoulder. She moved to make his palm slip downward, and laid her mouth on his.

"Not much life is left me," she choked. "Use what I have. Comfort me, Malcolm."

Stunned, he could only think: Storm, oh, Storm. He gave her back the kiss, he drowned in the waves of her hair, there was nothing but darkness and her.

And a torch flared through the bars. A spear gestured, a voice

barked, "Come. You, the man. He wants you."

VI

BRANN of the Rangers sat alone in the Long House. The holy fire had gone out, but radiance from a crystalline globe sheened off the bearskin on his dais. The warriors who led Lockridge to him bent their knees with awe.

"God among us," said their burly redhaired leader, "we have fetched the wizard as you commanded."

Brann nodded. "That is well. Wait in a corner."

The four men touched tomahawk to brow and withdrew beyond the circle of illumination. Their torch sputtered red and yellow, light barely touching the weatherbeaten faces. Silence stretched.

"Be seated, if you wish," Brann said mildly, in English. "We have much to talk about, Malcolm Lockridge."

How did he know the complete name?

The American remained on his feet, because otherwise he would have had to sit by Brann, and looked at him. So this was the enemy.

The Ranger had removed his cloak, to show a lean, long-muscled body almost seven feet tall, clad in the form-fitting black

Lockridge remembered from the corridor. His skin was very white, the hands delicately tapered, the face . . . beautiful, you could say, narrow, straight-nosed, a cold perfection of line. There was no trace of beard; the hair was dense and closely cut, like a sable cap. His eyes were iron gray.

He smiled. "Well, stand, then." He pointed to a bottle and two glasses, slim lovely shapes beside him. "Will you drink? The wine is Bourgogne 2012. That was a wonderful year."

"No," Lockridge said.

Brann shrugged, poured for himself, and sipped. "I do not necessarily mean you harm," he said.

"You've done enough already," Lockridge spat.

"Regrettable, to be sure. Still, if one has lived with the concept of time as unchangeable, unappeasable—has seen much worse than today, over and over and over, and risked the same for himself—what use in sentimentalism? For that matter, Lockridge, today you killed a man whose wives and children will mourn him."

"He was fixin' to kill me, wasn't he?"

"True. But he was not a bad man. He guided his kin and dependents as well as he was able, treated his friends honorably and did not go out of his way to

be horrible to his enemies. You passed through the village on your way here. Be honest. You saw no slaughter, no torture, no mutilation, no arson—did you? On the whole, in centuries to come, this latest wave of immigrants will blend in rather peacefully. The affray here was somewhat exceptional. Far oftener, in northern Europe if not in the South or East, the newcomers will dominate simply because their ways are better suited to the coming age of bronze. They are more mobile, have wider horizons, can better defend themselves; on that account, the aborigines will imitate them. You yourself have been shaped by them, and so has much you hold dear."

"Words," Lockridge said. "The fact is, you got 'em to attack us. You killed friends of mine."

Brann shook his head. "No. The Koriach did."

"Who?"

"The woman. What did she call herself to you?"

Lockridge hesitated. But he could see no gain in being stubborn about trifles. "Storm Daroway."

Brann laughed without sound. "That fits. Her pattern was always flamboyant. Very well, if you like, we shall call her Storm." He set his glass down and leaned forward. The long features grew stern. "She brought this trouble

on the villagers, by coming to them. And she knew the risk. Do you seriously believe she cared one atom what might happen, to them or to you? No, no, my friend, you were all only counters in a very large and very old game. She has molded whole civilizations, and cast them aside when they no longer served her purpose, as calmly as you might discard a broken tool. What are a handful of Stone Age savages to her?"

Lockridge clenched his fists. "Shut up!" he shouted.

A STIR and a growl came from the Yuthoaz in the shadows. Brann waved them back, though he kept a hand near the energy pistol at his broad coppery belt. "She does make a rather overwhelming impression. No doubt she told you that her Wardens stand for absolute good and we Rangers for absolute evil. You would have no way of disproof. But think, man. When was such a thing ever true?"

"In my own time," Lockridge retorted. "Like the Nazis." Brann cocked an eyebrow with such sardonicism that he must add, feebly, "I don't claim the Allies were saints. But damn it, the choice was clear."

"Where is your evidence, other than Storm's word, that the situation in the time war is analogous?" Brann asked.

Lockridge swallowed. The night seemed to close in, with murk and damp and remote indifferent forest sounds. He felt his aloneness, and tightened sinews against it till his jaws ached.

"Listen," Brann said earnestly. "I do not, myself, maintain that we Rangers are models of virtue. This is as ruthless a war as was ever fought, a war between philosophies, whose two sides shape the very past that brought them into being. I ask you, though, to consider. Is the science that sends men beyond the moon, liberates them from toil and famine, saves a child from strangling with diphtheria—is it evil? Is the Constitution of the United States evil? Is it wrong for man to use his reason, the one thing that makes him more than an animal, and to harness the animal within him? Well, if not, where do these things come from? What view of life, what kind of life, must there be to create them?"

"Not the Wardens' way! Do you seriously think this earthward-looking, magic-muttering, instinct-bound, orgiastic faith of the Goddess can ever rise above itself? Would you like to see it return in the future? It has done so, you know, in my age. And then, like the worm that bites its own tail, it has gone back to cozen and terrify men in this twilight past, until they grovel be-

fore Her. Oh, they can be happy, in a fashion; the influence is diluted. But wait until you see the horror of the Wardens' real reign!

"Think—one small archeological item—the aborigines here bury their dead in communal graves. But the Battle Ax culture gives each his own. Does that suggest anything to you?"

Lockridge had a fleeting odd recollection of his grandfather telling him about the Indian wars. He'd always sympathized with the Indians; and yet, if he could rewrite their history, would he?

He thrust the disturbing thought away, straightened, and said, "I chose Storm Darroway's side. I'm not about to change."

"Or did she choose you? How did you happen to meet?"

Lockridge had not meant to reveal a word. God alone knew what enemy purpose that would serve. But—well—Brann didn't act like a villain. And if he could be mollified, he might go easier on Storm. And anyhow, what importance did the details of Lockridge's recruitment have? He explained curtly. Brann asked some questions. Before Lockridge quite knew what had happened, he was seated by the Ranger, a glass in his hand, and had told the entire story.

"Ah, so," Brann nodded. "A curious affair. Though not un-

typical. Both sides use natives in their operations. That is one of the practical reasons for all this juggling of cultures and religions. You seem unusually able, however. I would like to have you for my ally."

"You won't," Lockridge said, less violently than he had intended.

Brann gave him a sidewise glance. "No? Perhaps not. But tell me again, how did Storm Darrowway finance herself in your era?"

"Robbery," Lockridge was forced to confess. "She set her energy pistol to stun. Didn't have any choice. *You* waged war."

Brann freed his gun and toyed with it. "You may be interested to know," he said idly, "that these weapons cannot be set at less than lethal force."

LOCKRIDGE sprang up. The glass fell from his grasp. It did not shatter, but the wine ran across the floor like blood.

"They can, though, disintegrate a corpse," Brann said.

Lockridge's fist leaped at the talking mouth. Brann wasn't there to meet the blow. He had flicked aside, risen, and covered the other man with his pistol. "Easy," he warned.

"You're lyin'," Lockridge gasped. The world rocked around him.

"If and when I can trust you,

you will be welcome to test a gun for yourself," Brann said. "Meanwhile, use your brain. I know somewhat of the twentieth century, not only through this diaglossa but the months I spent hunting my opponent—for I did know she had escaped alive. From your account—easy, I said!—from your account, Lockridge, she had thousands of dollars. How many passersby must she have stunned, to rifle their wallets, before she got that sum together? Would such a wave of robberies, where person after person awakened from a mysterious swoon, not have been the sensation of the year? Would it not? But you read never a word.

"On the other hand, disappearances are quite common, and if the one who vanishes is obscure, the story only makes a back page of the local newspaper. . . . Wait. I did not say she never used her gun to burgle an empty place at night, and set a fire to cover her traces; though it is queer that she did not tell you this was her *modus operandi*. But I do offer you evidence that she is—perhaps not consciously evil. Perhaps merely without mercy. After all, she is a goddess. What are mortals to her, who is immortal?"

Lockridge heaved air into his lungs. An uncontrollable trembling ran through him, his skin was cold and his mouth dry.

Somehow he was able to speak: "You got the drop on me. But I'm goin'. I don't have to listen to any more."

"No," Brann agreed. "I think best you be shown the truth gradually. You are a loyal sort of man. Which makes me think you will prove valuable, once you have decided where your true loyalty lies."

Lockridge turned on his heel with a snarl and strode for the door. The Yuthoaz hurried to surround him.

Brann's voice came in pursuit: "For your information, you *will* change sides. How do you think I learned of the Warden corridor in America, and of Storm's flight to this milieu? How do you even think I know your name? You came to my own time and place, Lockridge, and warned me!"

"You lie!" he screamed, and fled the house.

Hard hands dragged him to a stop. He stood cursing for a long while.

WHEN finally a measure of calm returned, he looked around as if in search of a foundation for his universe. Avildaro lay empty and still. Those women and children who had not escaped to the wilderness—with the old, whom the invaders had contemptuously let go—were herded at the campfires which

twinkled in the meadows. Thence came a sad lowing of seized cattle; more distantly, frogs croaked. The huts were shaggy-topped blots of blackness. Before them shimmered the water, behind them rustled the grove, under a sky splendid with stars. The air was cool and moist.

"Not easy, talking with a god, aye?" said the redhaired leader with some compassion.

Lockridge snorted and began to walk toward the cabin where Storm was. The Yutho stopped him. "Hold, wizard. The god has told us you can't see her again, or you might cook trouble." In his tumult, Lockridge had not heard that. "He told us also that he's taken away your power to work spells," the warrior added. "So why not be a man like any other? We have to keep you guarded, but we mean you no ill."

Storm! Lockridge cried within himself. But there was no choice save to leave her alone in the dark. The torch, held by a young man with an oddly pleasant freckled countenance, threw its restless dim light on tomahawks held at the ready.

He surrendered and fell in step with his captors. The chief walked beside him. "My name is Withucar, Hronach's son," he said affably. "My sign is the wolf. Who are you, and whence came you?"

Lockridge looked into the candid, eager blue eyes and could not hate him. "Call me Malcolm," he answered dully. "I'm from America, a long way off across the sea."

Withucar grimaced. "A wet way, and not mine." After a moment: "Understand, I've naught ill to say of the sea and woods tribes. We'd not have moved against you today, had not our god commanded us. But he told us this place was sheltering a witch who was his enemy. Myself, I'd as lief have traded. But now we're here, well, we'll take our reward. Though I don't know if we'll stay. The chiefs will hold council about that."

A dreamy part of Lockridge, four thousand years removed, analyzed. "Chief," for instance: the word meant simply "patriarch," and the authority was limited. These Battle Ax people were not fiends, but just the latest immigrants. They were more warlike, of course, than those who had dwelt here since the glaciers receded; yet they were also more individualistic, less bound by ritual and taboo, their religion a clean faith in sun, wind, rain, fire. The darker elements of Nordic paganism would enter later, from the old earth cults. . . . He refused to carry that thought further.

"Here we are," the Yutho said. "I'm sorry we must bind you for

the night. That's no way to treat a man. But the god ordered us. And wouldn't you rather sleep in the open than in one of those filthy huts?"

Lockridge scarcely heard. He stopped in his tracks with an oath.

The campfire burned high, blotting out the Great Bear in smoke, dancing with flames that picked forth Withucar's chariot and his hobbled horses where they grazed. Another half dozen men lounged around it, weapons close to hand but eyes sleepy and sated. One—a boy of perhaps seventeen, square-shouldered in his leather, a downy cheek puckered by an old battle scar—held a thong. The other end was tied around Auri's wrist.

"By all the Maruts!" Withucar exclaimed. "What's this?"

The girl had lain huddled in hopelessness. When she saw Lockridge, she sprang up with a cry. Her hair was matted, grime on her face was streaked by wept-out tears, a bruise on her thigh stood red and purpling.

The boy grinned. "We heard someone slink about not long ago. I was the one who found and caught her. Pretty, aye?"

"Lynx!" Auri wailed in her own speech. She stumbled toward him. The young warrior jerked her leash. She fell onto her knees.

"Lynx, I escaped to the for-

est, but I had to come back and see if you—" She could talk no more.

Lockridge stood gripped in nightmare.

"Well, well," Withucar smiled. "The gods must like you, Thuno."

"I waited until you came back, chieftain," the boy said, a little smugly. "May I take her away now?"

Withucar nodded. Thuno rose, grabbed a handful of Auri's hair and forced her to her feet. "Come along, you," he said. His lips, half parted, glistened.

She screamed and tried to pull free. He cuffed her so her head rocked. "Lynx!" she sobbed: a grisly, grinding noise, despair that clawed for words. "I must not!"

THE paralysis broke from Lockridge. He knew what she meant. Until the ban on her was lifted, it was death and more than death for her to lie with a man. Never mind about superstition; how would his own sister have felt? "No!" he yelled.

"Ha?" Withucar said.

"I know her." His appeal tumbled from Lockridge. He shook the chief by the shoulders. "She's holy—not to be touched—there's the worst of curses for anyone who does."

The men about the fire, who had watched in amusement, sprang erect and bristled. With-

ucar looked dismayed. But Thuno, aroused as he was, snapped, "He lies!"

"I'll swear by anything you like," Lockridge said.

"What are a wizard's oaths worth?" Thuno sneered. "If he means she's a maiden, well, what harm's that ever done us! And she can't be anything else. They don't have sacred women here, except for one old crone who's whelped many a time while young."

Withucar's gaze flickered back and forth. He tugged his beard and said in unease, "Right . . . right . . . but still—Best you be safe."

"I am a free man," Thuno said harshly. "On my head be whatever happens." He laughed. "I know the first thing that'll happen. Come!"

"You're the chief," Lockridge raved to Withucar. "You must stop him!"

The Yutho sighed. "I cannot. As he said, he is a free man." He regarded the American shrewdly. "I've seen those who came under the terror of the gods. You haven't that look. Maybe you want her for yourself?"

Auri raked fingernails at Thuno's grinning face. He got her by the arm and twisted. She stumbled before him.

And her father and her brother lay out for ravens to eat—Lockridge exploded into motion.

WITHUCAR stood next to him. Lockridge whirled and drove a fist into the leader's belly, just below the rib cage. Tough muscle resisted his knuckles, bruisingly, but the man lurched and went to the ground.

The freckled lad who held the torch dropped it and whipped up his ax. Lockridge's Marine training responded. One step brought him close. He chopped at the throat with the edge of his hand. The Yutho uttered a croak, crumpled, and lay still.

Before he could grab the other's weapon, Lockridge sensed a body at his back. Reflex brought his wrists to his neck. Arms closed around it. He felt their hairiness, snapped his wrists apart again, and broke the stranglehold. Turning, he put a leg behind the warrior's ankles and shoved. One more down!

The men around the fire howled and surged against him. Lockridge swept the torch off the earth. A comet's tail of fire blazed when he swept it at the nearest pair of eyes. That attacker stumbled back before he should be blinded. Two others fell over him in a tangle of limbs and curses.

Lockridge leaped over the fire. Thuno stood there alone, gaping. But as the American came upon him, he let go Augi's leash. His

own ax was not quickly reachable, but he yanked out his flint dagger and rushed in with an overhand stab.

Lockridge blocked that with one wrist. The sharp edge slithered along his forearm. Blood ran from the gash it left. Lockridge didn't notice. He brought his knee up. Thuno shrieked and reeled away.

"Run, Auri!" Lockridge belted.

He had only disabled two out of ten. The rest charged around the fire. He couldn't win over so many, but he could gain her time—He pelted off. A hurled spear smote the ground beside him.

He stopped, pulled the weapon free, and faced the attack. Don't try to stab with this thing, he thought amidst the hammering in his temples. Got better uses for a long straight shaft. He held it in both hands near the middle, balanced on his toes, and waited.

The mass poured upon him. He went into a rage of quarter-staff play. Wood smote solidly on a head, broke fingers that held an ax, rammed a solar plexus, darted between legs to trip, whirled and clattered and thudded home. The night turned into blows, grunts, shouts, where firelight made teeth and eyeballs flash.

Suddenly, fantastically, Lockridge stood alone. Three Yuthoaz groaned and writhed in the shad-

ows that wove about his feet. The rest had scattered. They panted and glared at him from near the fire. He saw their hides gleam with sweat.

"Maruts snatch you off!" Withucar roared. "He's only a man!" Still his four hale followers remained at bay. They did not even string a bow.

With his wind back, the chief-tain advanced by himself. Lockridge swung the stick at him. Squint-eyed, Withucar had been watching for that. He parried with his tomahawk. The violence rang through Lockridge's bones. His weapon fell from numbed hands. Withucar kicked it out of reach, bawled victory, and trod close. And now, from other camps, others who had heard the racket came running.

Lockridge jumped to meet the Yutha. Again he blocked a downward blow. His shoulder thrust against Withucar. Dimly, he felt a beard bristle across his skin. He got an arm lock. A heave, cruelly deft—bone snapped with a pistol crack—Withucar floundered off, wheezing through tight-held jaws.

A BIG man from another fire was almost upon Lockridge, ax aloft. He wore a tunic. Lockridge braced himself, swerved from the attack, took its impact on his hip; his fingers grabbed coarse cloth and a single judo

maneuver turned motion into flight. The big man crashed six feet away.

The night burst with howls. Men drew back, shadows in shadow. Lockridge seized Withucar's tomahawk, whirled it on high, and let loose a rebel yell.

Like lightning, he realized what had happened. However total their victory, the invaders were inwardly shaken by the forces they had seen today. Now one man had beaten half a dozen in as many minutes. Darkness and confusion made it impossible to see that he had simply used tactics unknown to this era. He was a troll broken free, and terror seized them.

They didn't run, but they milled beyond his edge of clear vision. The diaglossa hinted what to cry: "I will eat the next man who touches me!" Their horror winded through the night. Sky Father's worshippers still feared the earth gods, for whom, further inland, a human being was devoured every harvest.

Slowly, Lockridge turned and walked off. His back ached with the tension of awaiting a spear, an arrow, a skull-crushing ax blow . . . and not looking behind. He saw the world through a haze, and his heart kept sickeningly missing beats.

An oak reared gnarly before him. The leaves whispered.

Somewhere a nightjar echoed them. Lockridge passed into the dark of the far side.

A hand plucked at him. He recoiled and struck out. His fist brushed softness. "Lynx," quivered her voice, "wait for me."

He must hush several times before he could speak, dry-mouthed: "Auri, you should have run off."

"I did. I stopped here to see what befell you. Come." She pressed close, and the universe was no longer a fever dream. "I know ways to the forest," she said.

"That is well." Self-possession returned to him, like a series of bolts snicking home. He could think again. Peering around the tree bole, he saw fires scattered wide across the fields, figures that flitted among them, a rare gleam of polished stone or copper. The bass babble was just too distant for him to make out words.

"They will soon get back their courage," he said, "especially after Brann is told what happened and reassures them. The woods are not close, and they will search for us. Can we stay hidden?"

"She of the Earth will help us," Auri said.

She urged him out into the open and went on all fours. Weasel slim and supple, she traced a winding path where the

grass grew tallest. Lockridge followed her more clumsily. But he had stalked this way before, ages ago, in that unborn future when he was a boy.

Beyond enemy view, they rose and loped south. Neither spoke; breath was too precious. Lockridge's pupils expanded until he could see how the grass rippled in a breeze and how the copses stood pale on top, solidly black below, under the high constellations. Through foot-thuds, he heard a fox bark, a hare scutter, frogs chorus. Auri was a moving slenderness beside him, her mane white in the star-glow.

Then a wolf howled, from the woods that began to show dawning ahead. As if it were a signal, the bison horns moaned and he heard men yelp in pursuit of him.

The rest of the flight was a blur. He would never have escaped without Auri. Running, twisting, dodging, she led him through every dip of ground and patch of shadow that her Goddess afforded them. Once they lay behind a boulder and heard men go past, a yard away; once they got up a tree just before spears went bobbing underneath. When finally the forest enclosed him, he fell and lay like one whose bones had been sucked out.

AWARENESS returned in pieces. First he noticed glim-

mers of sky overhead, where the leaves left small open spaces. Otherwise he was nearly blind in the night. Bracken rustled and brushed his limbs with harsh fronds, but the ground was soft damp mould, pungent to smell. He tingled and throbbed. Yet Auri was curled against him, he felt her warmth and breath and caught the faint woodsmoke odor of her hair.

He forced himself to sit up. She awakened when he moved. "Did we really get away?" he mumbled.

"Yes," the girl said, her tone more level than his. "If they follow, we will know them by their trampling—" a note of scorn for all clumsy heathdwellers—"and find concealment." She hugged him. "Oh, Lynx!"

"Easy. Easy." He disengaged her and groped for the ax. Wonder touched him. "I never expected we both would escape."

"No, surely you knew what you did. You can do anything."

"Uh—" Lockridge shook his head, trying to clear it. For the first time, he understood what had gone on. He really hadn't planned events. Auri's plight triggered the rage pent in him; thereafter, drilled-in habits had carried him along. Unless, of course, the Tenil Orugaray were right in believing that a man could be possessed by Those who walked this wilderness.

"Why did you come back?" he asked.

"To seek you, who would lift the ban on me," Auri said naively.

That made sense, though it dashed his ego a little. She'd acted in what seemed her own self-interest. And maybe not too recklessly, even, judging by how she had given the Yuthoaz the slip afterward. Only by pure bad luck had she been heard and captured; then pure good luck brought Lockridge to the very band that had seized her.

Luck? Time could turn on itself. There was indeed such a thing as destiny. Though it might be blind—Lockridge remembered Brann's final word. "You came to me . . . and warned me!" An ugly thrill went down his nerves. No! he spat at the night. That was a lie!

Defiance brought decision. He paid Auri scant heed, while his plan and the somber sense of fate grew within him, but he heard her talking:

"Many got from Avildaro into the forest. I know where some are hidden, those I left to return to you. We can seek them out, and afterward another village of the Tenil Orugaray."

Lockridge braced himself. "You shall," he said. "But I have a different place to go."

"What? Where? Beneath the sea?"

"No, ashore. And at once, before Brann thinks to send men there. A forsaken dolmen, half a morning's walk to the south. Do you know it?"

Auri shivered. "Yes." Her voice grew thin. "The House of the Old Dead. Once the Tenil Vaskulan lived in that place and buried their great folk; now only ghosts. Must you indeed? And after sunset?"

"Yes. Have no fears."

She gulped. "Not . . . not if you say so."

"Come, then. Guide me."

THEY began to walk, through choked brush and down deer trails saturated with murk, he stumbling and swearing, she slipping sprite-like along. "You see," he explained when they stopped to rest, "my, uh, my friend, The Storm, is still in Brann's hands. I must try to get help for her rescue."

"That witch?" He heard a whisper of tangled locks as Auri tossed her head, and a sniff that actually made him chuckle. "Can she not look after herself?"

"Well, the rescue party should also be able to chase the Yuthoaz home."

"So you will come back!" she exclaimed in a rush of gladness. Somehow he didn't think it was selfish. And had her return to Avildaro been entirely so? He felt uncomfortable.

Little else was said. Progress was too difficult. The slow hours passed; and the night, short in this season near midsummer, began to wane. Stars paled, a grayness crept between the trees, the first twitter of birds came faint and clear.

Lockridge thought that now he could recognize the path he had followed with Storm. Not far to go—

Auri stiffened. Her eyes, luminous in the small dimly seen face, widened. "Hold!" she breathed.

"What?" Lockridge gripped the ax till his palm hurt.

"Do you not hear?"

He didn't. She led him forward, turning her head right and left, parting withes with enormous caution. Presently the sound reached him too: a crackle in the brush, far behind but ever more near.

His gullet tightened. "Animals?" he hoped foolishly.

"Men," Auri told him. "Bound our way."

So Brann had dispatched a patrol to guard the time gate. Had the Yuthoaz been as woodcrafty as this girl, they would have been waiting there for him. As matters stood, he had a chance.

"Fast!" he ordered. "Never mind silence. We must reach the dolmen ahead of them."

Auri sprinted. He came behind. In the misty twilight, he

stumbled over a log and into a stand of saplings. They caught at his garments and cried out in wooden voices. Shouts lifted from the glades at his back.

"They heard," Auri warned. "Swiftly!"

Over the trail they fled. Trees crawled past with horrible slowness. And the light strengthened.

When they emerged on the meadow, it lay aglitter with dew under a sky flushed rose. The hillock loomed before them. Breath raw in his lungs, knifed by his spleen, Lockridge made for the hollow tree where Storm had hidden the entrance control.

HE fumbled within. Auri screamed. Lockridge drew forth the metal tube and looked about. A score of warriors were at the edge of the clearing.

They roared when they saw him and bounded forward. Lockridge staggered with Auri, up the knoll, above a second-growth tangle into plain view. An arrow went *whoo-oo* past his ear.

"No, you dolt!" called the Yutho leader. "The god said to take him alive!"

Lockridge twisted studs on the tube. A man broke through the young trees at the foot of the mound, poised, and waved his fellows on. Lockridge saw with unnatural sharpness: braided hair, leather kilt, muscular torso and the long tomahawk—Brann

must have nerved this gang up to face almost anything.

The tube glowed and trembled in his grasp. Other Yuthoaz joined the first and plowed through grass and briars, on to do battle. Lockridge threw Withucar's ax. The lead man dodged and barked laughter. His followers rioted behind him.

The earth moved.

Auri wailed, went to her knees, and clutched Lockridge's waist. The Yuthoaz stopped cold. After an instant, they scampered with yells into the thicket below. There they halted. Glimpsewise through leaves, Lockridge saw them in their confusion. He heard their captain bay, "The god swore we couldn't be hurt by any magic! Come on, you sons of rabbits!"

The downramp shone white. The Yuthoaz advanced again. Auri couldn't be left here. Lockridge seized the girl's arm and flung her into the entrance.

The leader was almost upon him. He tumbled through the hole, fell flat, and twisted the controls. The hovering plug of earth moved down, blotted out the sky, hissed into place.

Silence closed like fingers.

Auri broke it in a shriek that rose swiftly toward hysteria. Lockridge slapped her. She sat where she was, dumbstricken, staring at him with eyes from which humanity was gone.

"I'm sorry," Lockridge said. And he was, as he watched the red blotch appear on her cheek. "But you must not run wild. We are safe now."

"W-w-w-w—" She fought for breath. Her gaze dashed back and forth, around the icily lit walls that enclosed her; she groveled on the floor and whimpered, "We are in the House of the Old Dead."

Lockridge shook her and snapped, "There is nothing to fear. They have no powers against me. Believe!"

He had not expected will to mount so fast in her. She drank several sobs, her body stiffened and shaking, but after a minute of regarding him she said, "I believe you, Lynx," and the craziness departed.

That gave him back his own strength, together with a bleak alertness. "I did not mean for you to come here," he said, "but we had no choice if you were not to be caught. Now you will see strange things. Do not let them frighten you." A satiric part recalled how Storm had given him much the same advice. Had he indeed come to accept this eldritch world of passage between the ages... so soon? His home century seemed a half-forgotten dream.

But that was doubtless because of present urgency. "We have to move," he said. "The

Yuthoaz cannot follow us in here, but they will tell their master, and he can. Or we may meet—well, never mind." If they, unarmed, encountered Rangers in the corridor, that was the end of the affair. "This way."

SHE followed him mutely, down to the foreroom. The auroral curtain in the gate drew a gasp from her, and she held his hand with a child's tightness. He rummaged through the locker but found nothing except outfits appropriate to this milieu. Time travelers must carry their own advanced gear. Damn!

It was a gruesome effort to step through the gate, when anything might lie beyond. But the corridor stretched in humming whiteness, empty as far as he could see. He let the wind out of his chest and collapsed weakly onto the gravity sled.

They couldn't linger, though. At any moment, someone might enter through some other gate and spy them. (Just what did that mean, here in this time which ran outside of time? He'd think about it later.) Moving his hands experimentally to cover the control lights, he found how to operate the vehicle and sent it gliding futureward.

Auri sat close beside him. She clutched the bench hard, but panic was gone and she even showed a trace of bright-eyed

curiosity. There was less amazement in her than he had felt. But then, to her all these wonders were equally wonderful, and, in fact, no more mysterious than rain, wind, birth, death, and the wheel of the seasons.

"So what to do?" Lockridge puzzled aloud. "I could go on to 1964, and we might try just to disappear. But I don't reckon that'd work. Too damn many Rangers there, and too damn easy for 'em to trace a man, especially when you'd make us sort or conspicuous, kid. And if Storm herself couldn't make contact with any Wardens then, I sure can't." He realized he had spoken in English. Doubtless Auri took his words for an incantation.

What had Storm told him?

Instantly, overwhelmingly, he was back in the prison hut, and she was with him, and his mouth knew her kiss. For a while he forgot everything else.

Sense came back. The corridor encompassed him with blind radiance, with hollowness and strangeness. Storm was far away—centuries away. But he could return to her. And would, by heaven!

Might he dash clear up to her age? No. This shaft didn't reach that far. And too risky, in any event. The sooner they got out and vanished in the world, the better. But she had spoken of a

Herr Jesper Fledelius, in Viborg of the Reformation era—

Yes, his best bet. And, too, a feeling of destiny still drove him.

He slowed the sled and paid attention to the gate markers. He couldn't read their alphabet, but Arabic numerals were recognizable. Pretty clearly, years were counted from the "lower" end of the passage. So, if 1827 B.C. equalled 1175. . . .

When the numbers 45-- appeared, he stopped the sled and sent it back. Auri waited while he forced himself to study the layout and think. Blast that uncertainty factor! He wanted to come out a few days in advance of All Hallows, to allow time to reach Viborg, but not so far in advance that Brann's hounds could get on his track.

As best he could, he selected a line in the set corresponding to Anno Domini 1535. Auri linked fingers with him and followed him tremblingly through the curtain.

Again the long, silent room, and the locker. There would be clothes here, he knew, money, diaglossas. He could pretend to be a traveling merchant, she his wife, until Fledelius put them in touch with the witch cult. And it, he knew from history, was actually a sort of neo-paganism, born out of the despair among common folk that followed the suppression of the peasant re-

volts; but Warden agents guided it, to have a network of secret agents on hand.

He'd better proceed warily, though. His knowledge was scant. Just what the hell had gone on in Denmark of the sixteenth century? Hell indeed, if the time war was involved.

VIII

ON a hill in the wastes burned the witchfire. Light flickered red off a high boulder to which Auri made obeisance. It had been an altar in her own time. Overhead the stars of All Hallows Eve glittered many and remote. The land was still, the air frosty.

Lockridge paid little attention to the shabby, pathetic worshippers, nor even to the girl or the knight Fledelius where they stood at the restless rim of illumination. He dismissed remembrance of hard overland journeying, through a land shattered by civil war, first to Viborg to make his contact and then here. His look and mind were all with the Master.

Tall and lean stood Marcus Nielsen, his alien features shadowed by the cowl of a tattered Dominican habit. In this age they knew him as a hedge priest. Unlike England, where he called himself Mark of Salisbury, Denmark did not persecute Catholics;

but magicians were in danger of the stake. He was born Mareth the Warden two thousand years after Lockridge, and he flitted the byways of Reformation Europe to serve Storm Darroway his queen.

"You bear evil tidings," he said in contemporary French.

He paused, then: "You may not know how important she and Brann are. So few on either side are capable of temporal operations. They become like primitive kings, leading their troops into battle. You and I are nothing, but her capture is a disaster."

"Well," Lockridge said brusquely, "You've been warned now. I suppose you have access to the future. Organize a rescue party."

"Matters are not that simple," Mareth answered. "In the whole period of history from Luther to—beyond your time—the Rangers are ascendant. Warden forces are concentrated elsewhere. We maintain only a few agents like myself in this century." He twisted his fingers together and frowned at them. "In fact, frankly, we seem at the moment to be cut off. As nearly as our intelligence can learn, every gate from which one might go very far futureward from now is watched."

"Hell take it, you're supposed to handle problems!"

"Yes, yes. I see a means. But not the obvious one you have in

mind. There is no point in using the Danish shaft at all. We have nothing here to help us but those." His gesture at the Coven was contemptuous. "And, since we did not appear to save her the very night she was taken, we will not. We cannot. The chances are that we will not appear—will not have appeared—until after Brann has a number of Rangers with him, and a guard posted on the gate.

"But in this present century, Denmark is only a marchland for us. What European strength we have is concentrated in Britain. King Henry has forsaken the Roman Church; but we saw to it that he did not go over to Lutheranism either. What you know as the episode of two Queen Marys is a time of gain for the Wardens; the Rangers will resurge with Cromwell, but we will drive them out at the Restoration.

"(I know. You are wondering why anyone would wage a campaign whose outcome is known beforehand. Well, for one thing, in the course of waging it, casualties are inflicted on the enemy. More important, each piece of space-time, however small, which is firmly held, is a source of strength, of recruits, of power to call on when the final decision is being reached.)

"But to continue. I have a flock in England too, and they are not starveling peasants. Nor

am I a despised pagan there. And . . . in England is a corridor whose existence the Rangers do not suspect, with its own gate on the Neolithic. That gate opens pastward of the Danish one, but there is a few months' overlap, in the exact year we must reach."

He seized Lockridge's shoulders. His visage blazed. "Man, are you with us? For her?"

HAI-EE! *Hingst, Hest, og Plag faar flygte Dag! Kommer, kommer, kommer!*"

The witchmaster's robe flapped about him like wings. As his arms and face turned heavenward, a whirlwind unseen, unfelt, unheard, lifted him and his chosen. Upward they flew until they were lost among cold constellations. The balefire flared from its coals, threw spark and flame after its lord, and sank again. The folk of the Coven shuddered and departed.

Auri bit back a cry and clung to Lockridge's hand. The American shared some of her terror. He had flown before, but never at the end of a gravity beam.

There was no airblast. The force that streamed from the belt under Mareth's habit deflected it around an envelope of warmth. One went bat silent, several hundred feet above ground, and speed mounted into the hundreds of miles per hour.

Darkling rolled the heath; the Limfjord shimmered; the wester dunes fell behind and the North Sea ran in waves touched with icy gleams by a sickle moon. Lost in night and wonder, Lockridge was startled when England bulked into view—so quickly?

Across the flatlands of East Anglia they went. Thatch-roofed villages lay among stubblefields, a castle raised battlements above a river, it was dream and impossible that he, prosaic he should follow a wizard through the sky on the same night as King Henry snored beside Anne Boleyn . . . poor Anne whose head would fly from the ax in less than a year, and none to warn her . . . but her daughter lay cradled in that same palace and was named Elizabeth. The strangeness possessed Lockridge like a vision: not merely his own fate, but the mystery that was every man's.

Cultivation gave way to a wilderness where islands crowded among meres and marshy streams, the Lincolnshire Fens. Mareth swooped downward. The last withered leafage parted before him, he came to rest and deftly drew in the others. By the paling sky Lockridge saw a wattle hut.

"This is my English base," the Warden told him. "The time gate lies beneath. You will remain here while I gather men."

Behind that primitive facade,

the cabin was almost luxurious, with hardwood floors and wainscoting, ample furniture and a good store of books. Food stocks and other supplies from the future were hidden behind sliding panels; nothing showed that would have been too foreign to this century. An intruder might have noticed how the interior kept warm and dry in every season. However, none ventured here. The peasants had their superstitions, the gentry were in-different.

Lockridge and Auri were only too glad of a respite. They were ordinary humans, not master-works of an age that could shape heredity in any desired pattern, and their nerves were stretched near breaking. The next two days were an interlude of sleep and hazy half wakefulness.

ON the third morning, though, she sought him. He was seated on a bench outside the door, enjoying a smoke. While not an addict, he had rather missed tobacco, and it was thoughtful, if slightly anachronistic, of the Wardens to keep some on hand along with clay pipes. And the weather had turned pleasant. Sunlight spilled wan between the naked willows. A belated flock of geese made a southward V far overhead, their honking drifted down to him through a great quietness, far

and lonely wander-song. Then he heard her feet patter close, looked up and was struck by beauty.

There had been no time, before he tumbled into this drowsy interlude, to think of her as much except a child that needed what small protection he could spare. But on this morning she had gone out in a marsh almost like the one at home, clad in no more than her waist-long corn-silk hair, and was renewed. She scampered toward him with a deer's grace, eyes blue and huge in the pert countenance. He saw laughter and marvel on her lips and stood up with his pulse begun to race.

"Oh, come look," she cried, "I've found the most wonderful boat!"

"Good Lord!" Lockridge choked. "Get some clothes on, girl."

"Why? The air is warm." She danced before him. "Lynx, we can go out on the water and fish, the whole day is ours and the Goddess is happy and you must be rested now, come along, do!"

"Well—" Well, why not? "Yes. You get dressed, though, understand?"

"If you wish." Puzzled but obedient, she fetched a shift from the cabin, and darted through the woods ahead of Lockridge.

The skiff, tied to a stump,

looked simple to him. But of course Auri's boats were coracles, or dugouts with bulwarks secured by pegs and withes. This one used nails of real metal! And she gasped to see him row, instead of punt or paddle. "Surely this came from Crete," she breathed.

He hadn't the heart to tell her Crete lay impoverished and oppressed under the Venetians, awaiting next century's Turkish conquest. "Maybe." He slid the boat among reeds and osiers until he reached an open stretch of shallow water. Here the island was hidden by brush and the mere blinked bright and still. Auri had taken fishing tackle as well as her garment. She baited a hook and cast skilfully toward a lurking place under a log. He sprawled back and got his pipe started afresh.

"That's a strange rite you do," Auri said.

"Only for pleasure."

"Can I try? Please?"

She wheedled him into it, with the expected results. Gulping and sputtering, she handed back the pipe. "Whoo-ah!" She wiped her eyes. "No, too strong for the likes of me."

Lockridge chuckled. "I warned you, young one."

"I should have listened. You are never wrong."

"Now, wait—"

"But I wish you wouldn't

speak to me as to a child." She flushed. The long lashes quivered downward. "I am ready to become a woman whenever you want me."

The blood mounted in Lockridge too. "I've promised to take the spell off you," he mumbled. The idea occurred to him that he might die in the coming battle. "In fact, it is off. You need no further magic. Uh . . . passage through the underworld, you know . . . rebirth. Do you see?"

Gladness leaped in her. She moved toward him.

"No, no, no!" he said desperately. "I can't—myself—"

"Why not?"

"Look, uh, look around you, this isn't springtime."

"Does that matter? Everything else has changed. And Lynx, you are so very dear to me."

SHE pressed against him, warm, round, and eager. Her mouth and hands had an enchanting awkwardness. He thought, in the cloud of her tresses and herself, Why, my own grandfather would've called her husband high. . . . No, damn it!

"I'll have to leave you, Auri—"

"Then leave me with your child. I w-w-won't think beyond that, not today."

Strictness was beyond him. He could only hit on one thing to

do. He let himself be pushed too far to one side, and the skiff capsized.

By the time they had righted it and bailed it out, matters were under control. Auri accepted the sign of godly displeasure without fear, for she had spent her life among such omens, nor even with overmuch disappointment, for the heart was too sunny in her. She peeled off the wet shift in a fit of giggles at Lockridge's refusal to do likewise.

"At least I may look at you," she said when a soberer mood came. "There will be other times, after you have set Avildaro free."

A glumness had settled on him. "The village you knew won't come again," he said. "Remember who fell."

"I know," she answered gravely. "Echegon, who was always kind, and Vurowa the merry, and so many more." But everything that had passed since had blurred her grief. Besides, the Tenil Orugaray were not given to mourning a loss as keenly as those who came after them. They had learned too well to accept what was.

"And you'll still have the Yuthoaz to reckon with," Lockridge said. "We may push this one band out, this one time. But there are others, strong and land-hungry. They will return."

"Why must you always fret so, Lynx?" Auri cocked her

head. "We do have this day . . . and whee, a fish!"

He wished he could join her in more than a pretense of merriment. But his own dead were too much with him: nations, kings, and the unremembered humble, through all the ages of the time war.

They were lunching off their catch, *sashimi* style, when a horn blew. Lockridge started. This fast? He rowed hard to get back.

Mareth was indeed there, with six other Wardens. They had abandoned the disguises of priest, knight, merchant, yeoman, beggar for a uniform skintight like the Rangers', but forest green and with iridescent cloaks cataracting from their shoulders. Under the bronzy helmets, long dark eyes in faces eerily akin to Storm's looked aloofly upon their helpers.

"We have one more agent in the British Isles," Mareth said. "He will bring our army after dark. Meanwhile, we have preparations to make."

Lockridge and Auri found themselves working on tasks they did not understand. Because this corridor was secret from the enemy, and this gate opened on a vital period, the anteroom was stocked with engines of war and the exits were broad enough to admit them. The American could identify some things in a general way, vehicles, guns; but what

was the crystalline globe in which a night swirled, studded with starlike points? What was the helix of yellow fire that felt cold to the touch? His questions were rebuffed.

DUSK fell, and dark. Down the sky there whirled the men of Harry's England.

They were a wild, tough crew, a hundred in number: discharged soldiers, sailors half buccaneer, fortune-hunting younger sons, highwaymen, tinkers, rebellious Welshmen, Lowland cattle rustlers, gathered together from Dover to Lands End, from the Cheviot Hills to the London alleys. Lockridge could only guess how each had been recruited. Some for religion, some for money, some for refuge from the hangman—one by one, the Wardens found them and drew them into a secret league, and now the hour was on hand to use them.

Torchlight picked faces out of the mass that seethed and grumbled on the island. Lockridge stood next to a squat, pigtailed seaman in ragged shirt and trousers, barefoot, earringed, scarred by old fights. "Where are you from, friend?" he asked.

"A Devon man, I be." Lockridge could just understand him; even a Londoner still treated his vowels like a Dutchman, and this fellow added a dialect

thick enough to cut. "But I were in Mother Colley's stew in Southampton when the summons came." He smacked his lips. "Ah, there were a rare bounce-tail trull! Had I had one hour the longer, not soon 'ud she forget Ned Brown. But when the medallion spoke, God's bones, I've stood 'neath French gunfire and piked Caribals when they howled up the sides of our galleon, yet never 'ud I dare leave yon summons unheeded."

"The, uh, medallion?"

Brown tapped a disc hung about his neck, stamped with the image of the Virgin. Lockridge noticed the same thing on several other hairy breasts. "What, thou wert not gi'en this token? Well, it whispers when they've need o' thee, in such a way that none may hear save thyself, and tells whither thou must hie. *He* met me there and flitted me to a meeting ground in the wilds, thence hither. . . . I knew not the service numbered this many."

Mareth stood forth at the cabin door. His voice rose, not loudly, but the turbulence was hushed. "Men," he said, "long have most of you been in the Fellowship, and no few will remember times when it saved you from dungeon or death. You know you are enlisted in the cause of white magicians, who by their arts aid the Holy Catholic Faith

against paynim and heretic. This night you are called to redeem your pledge. Far and strangley shall you fare, to battle against wild men while we your masters engage the wizards they serve. Go you bravely forward, in God's name, and those who outlive the day shall have rich reward, while those who fall shall be yet more highly rewarded in Heaven. Kneel, now, and receive absolution."

Lockridge went through the ritual with a bad taste in his mouth. Was this much cynicism necessary?

Well—to save Storm Darroway. I'll be seein' her again, he thought, and the heart fluttered in him.

More hushed and serious than he would have believed possible, the English filed through the cabin door and down the ramp. In the anteroom, before the curtain of rainbow, they got their weapons: sword, pike, ax, crossbow. Gunpowder would be useless against the Rangers, needless against the Yuthoaz. But Mareth beckoned to Lockridge. "You had best stay with me, for a guide," he said, and laid an energy pistol in the American's hand. "Here, you come from a sufficiently sophisticated era to operate this. The controls are simple."

"I know how," Lockridge snapped.

Mareth dropped his hauteur. "Yes, she singled you out, did she not?" he murmured. "You are no ordinary man."

Auri struggled through the press. "Lynx," she pleaded. The terror was back to gnaw at her. "Stay near me."

"Have her wait here," Mareth ordered.

"No," Lockridge said. "She comes along if she wants to."

Mareth shrugged. "Keep her out of the way, then."

"I have to be in the forefront," Lockridge told her. She shivered between his palms. He must give her a kiss . . . mustn't he? "Go in one of the cars that will come last."

DURING the day, he had helped manhandle several flyers through the gate. They were sheening ovoids, transparent, not of matter but of forces he did not comprehend. Each could hold twenty. He shoved in to the lead one with Mareth. The men already there breathed heavily, whispered prayers or curses, and flicked their eyes about like trapped animals. "Will they not be too panicky to fight?" Lockridge wondered in Danish.

"No, I know them," Mareth said. "Besides, the initiation ceremonies involve unconscious conditioning. Their fear will turn to fury."

The machine rose without sound and started down the cold-white, humming bore. A Warden at every console, the others followed. "Since you've got this passage," Lockridge asked, "why didn't you get still more reinforcements from other periods?"

"None are available," Mareth said. He spoke absently, hands moving over the control lights, features taut with concentration. "The corridor was built chiefly for access to this very era. Its future end terminates in the eighteenth century, when we have another strong point in India. The Rangers are especially active in England between the Norman Conquest and the Wars of the Roses, so we have no gates opening on the Middle Ages at all—nor many in earlier epochs, when the critical regions, the theaters of major conflict, are elsewhere. In fact, gates throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Age North serve as little more than transfer points. It is largely a fortunate coincidence that we do have one here with a temporal overlap on the one in Denmark."

Lockridge wanted to inquire further. But the flyer, remorselessly swift, was already at the year they sought.

Mareth guided it out. He left for a glance at the calendar clock in the locker. "Good!" he said fiercely when he returned. "We were lucky. No need to wait."

This is night, with sunrise due soon, and must be quite near the moment when she was captured."

Force beams had kept the fleet together while they crossed the time threshold. They swept up the entry, which opened for them and closed again behind. Mareth set his controls for low flight eastward.

Lockridge stared out. Under the Stone Age moonlight, the Fens lay yet bigger and wilder. But beyond them, on the coast, he spied fisher villages that might almost have been Avildaro.

That was no accident. Before the North Sea came into being, men had walked from Denmark to England; the Maglemose culture was one. Afterward their boats crossed the waters, and Her missionaries came from the South to both lands. The diaglossa in his left ear told him that if they spoke slowly, the tribes of eastern England and western Jutland could still understand each other.

Such kinship faded with inland miles. Northern England was dominated by the hunters and axmakers who centered at Langdale Pike but traded from end to end of the island. The Thames valley had been settled, peacefully enough, by recent immigrants from across the Channel; and the farmers of the south downs were giving up those grim rites which formerly made them

shunned. That might be due the influence of a powerful, progressive confederation in the southwest, which had even started a little tin mining to draw merchants from the civilized lands. Chief among those were the Beaker People, who traveled in small companies and dealt in bronze and beer. An old era was dying in Denmark, a new one being born in England: this westland lay nearer to the future. Looking back, Lockridge saw rivers and limitless forests; as if from a dream, he knew how birds winged in their millions and elk shook their great horns and men were happy. It came to him with a pang that here was where he belonged.

No. The sea rolled beneath him. He was bound home to Storm.

Mareth went at a dawdler's pace, waiting for the sky to lighten. Even so, only a couple of hours had passed when the Limfjord slipped into view.

"Stand by!"

THE flyers snarled downward. Water flashed steely, dew glittered on the grass and leaves of a young summer suddenly reborn, Avildaro's roofs sprang from behind her sacred grove. Lockridge saw that the Battle Ax men were still encamped in the fields further on. He glimpsed a sentry, wide-eyed by

a dying watchfire, shouting men out of their blankets.

Another shimmery vessel whipped up from before the Long House. So Brann had had time to call in his people. Lightnings crackled under the waning stars, dazzling bright, thunder at their heels.

Mareth rattled a string of commands in an unknown language. A pair of flyers converged on the Rangers' one. Flame raved, and that bubble was not. Black-clad forms tumbled through the air to spatter horribly on the ground.

"Down we go," Mareth said to Lockridge. "They didn't expect attack, so there aren't many here. But if they call for help—We have to take control fast."

He skimmed the flyer along the bay, struck earth, and made the force-field vanish. "Get out!" he yelled.

Lockridge was first. The English poured after him. The other vehicles had descended some ways off, in the meadows where the Yuthoaz were. They rose again when their men were out. Cool and detached, the Warden pilots oversaw the battle, spoke commands through the amulets, made each man of theirs a chess piece.

Metal clanged against stone. Lockridge dashed for the hut. It was empty. He whirled and sped to the Long House.

A dozen Yuthoaz were on guard. Gallant in the face of supernatural dread, they stood fast with axes lifted. Brann trod forth.

His long visage was drawn into a disquieting grin. An energy pistol flashed in his hand. Lockridge's own gun was set to protect him. He plunged through the fire geyser and hurled his body at the Ranger. They went over in the dust. Their weapons skittered free and they sought each other's throats.

An English sword rose and fell. An axman tumbled in blood. Another smote, the Englishman countered, his fellows arrived and combat erupted..

From the corner of an eye, Lockridge glimpsed two more black-clad forms, spouts and crackles where beams played on shields. He himself had all he could do, fighting Brann. The Ranger was inhumanly strong and skilled. But suddenly he saw who Lockridge was, face to face. Horror stretched his mouth open. He let go and made a fending motion. Lockridge chopped him in the larynx, got on top, and banged his head on the earth till he went limp.

Not stopping to wonder what had happened inside that narrow skull, the American sprang up. Elsewhere, the English pursued Yutho sentries. The other Rangers lay scorched before Ma-

reth and his Warden companions. Lockridge ignored them. He burst through the doorway of the Long House.

Gloom filled the interior. He groped forward. "Storm," he called shakely, "Storm, are you there?"

Shadow among shadows, she lay bound on a dais. He felt sweat chill on her naked skin, ripped the wires from her head, drew her to him and sobbed. There was a moment beyond time when she did not move and he thought her dead. Then, "You came," she whispered, and kissed him.

IX

WORD rang through the forest, the refugees returned home, and joy dwelt in Avildaro.

The feast was not less wild and merry for being a funeral of the slain as well as a triumph. The strangers whose metal weapons had driven out the Yutboaz were welcomed into the frolic. They had no comprehensible language, but what did that matter? A roasting pig spoke to them with its savor, a man with his grin, a woman with herself.

Only the Long House was avoided. For there stayed the green gods who had delivered their people. Meat and drink were brought to the door, and every adult male vied for the

honor of standing by as servant or messenger. On the second noon of celebration, one sought out Lockridge, where he watched the dancers in a meadow, and said he was summoned.

He left with thumping eagerness. Worry about Storm had prevented him from taking much part in the sport. Now he was told that She of the Moon commanded his presence.

Sunlight, smells of woodland and smoke and salt water, distant shouts and songs, vanished from his consciousness when he entered the house. Not yet had the holy fire been rekindled; a promise was given that She would perform that rite in Her good time. Luminous globes made the interior radiant, rafters and columns stood forth rugged against sooty walls, the strewn furs glowed as if alive. Seven Wardens on the daises waited for their queen. They did not condescend to greet Lockridge.

But all rose when Storm appeared. The rear end of the house was now blocked off, not by a material screen but by a force curtain which drank down light. She came through it. Next to such blackness she seemed to burn.

Or no . . . she shone, Lockridge thought dizzily, like that sea which was also the Goddess'. The three days and nights of her

ordeal in the mind machine still marked her, high cheekbones stood sharply forth and the eyes smoldered feverish green. But she carried herself spear straight, and blue-black hair swept sheening past the tawny-ness of face and throat. From the gate of King Frodhi there had been brought her garb be-fitting her time and station. In blue translucence the robe de-scended to the copper belt of power; thence it broadened and rippled to the ankles, darkening toward purple, with argent em-blems inwoven that were at once foam and serpents. A brooch shaped like the Labrys upheld a cloak whose lining was white as a summer cloud but which out-side was gray for thunderheads and mare's-tails. Her shoes were gold sparked with diamond dust. A crescent of hammered silver crowned her brow.

Mareth accompanied her. He was saying something in the Warden language. Storm's ges-ture chopped off his words. "Speak so Malcolm can un-derstand you," she ordered in the Orugaray.

He looked shocked. "This hog-tongue, brilliance?"

"Cretan, then. It's subtle enough."

"But brilliance, I was about to report on—"

"He needs to know." Storm let him swallow his humiliation

while she advanced to Lockridge. She smiled. He bent unskilfully to kiss the hand she offered.

"I've not yet thanked you for what you did," Storm said. "But no words would serve. It was more than saving me. You struck a mighty blow for our whole cause."

"I—I'm glad," he gulped.

"Be seated, if you wish." Cal-lithe, she turned from him and began to pace. He did not hear her footfalls on the dirt. Weak in the knees, he sank down beside a Warden, who nodded to him with instant deference.

VIBRANCY played over Storm's features. "We have Brann alive," she said. The soft Cretan speech clanged in her throat. "With what we are learn-ing from him, we have a chance to win the upper hand in Europe for the next thousand years. Mareth, proceed."

He who was priest and war-lock had stayed on his feet. "I cannot understand how you en-dured, brilliance," he said. "Al-ready Brann cracks. The trickle of his secrets will soon be a flood."

"He got the same from me," Storm said grimly. "Had he been able to use the information—No, I don't want to be reminded."

Lockridge glanced at the dark veil. His stomach writhed. Be-hind lay Brann.

He didn't know just what was being done. Not torture, surely. Storm wouldn't stoop to that, and anyhow it was crude, probably even useless against the nerves bred and trained, the unshakable will, of the future's lords. Storm had been drugged; currents of force had roiled her brain to its inmost depths. They would not let her die, but overrode the ego and compelled a ghastly automatism of thought, so that inch by inch everything she had ever known and done, everything she dreamed and was, came to the surface and was coldly marked into the molecules of a wire.

No living creature should have to go through that. The hell not! Lockridge boiled. Brann's eatin' his own medicine, after he got my friends killed who'd never hurt him any. This is a war.

Mareth collected his dignity. "So," he began. "We have learned the immediate situation, that being in the focus of his attention. When Lockridge escaped up the corridor, Brann had naturally no idea of the help available in England. But the possibility that Lockridge might somehow get news to the Wardens was worrisome. Thus Brann informed his agents throughout Danish history. They are, ah, still searching for our man, no doubt, and for any indications of a Warden rescue party being organized.

"Meanwhile, he had to balance the risks of transporting your brilliance elsewhere and elsewhere, or keeping you here. Since he had some reason to believe Lockridge would not, after all, betray him to us, he decided to stay, at least temporarily. This is a distant and seldom visited milieu. If he brought in only a few Rangers, and kept the Battle Ax people on hand as his principal auxiliaries, he should be fairly safe from detection.

"But as a result, we now have him, and unbeknownst to his organization. When we have completed his processing, we will have the information needful to mount surprise assaults on Ranger positions throughout time, ambush individual agents, break up enclaves—deal them the worst setback of the whole war."

Storm nodded. "Yes. I have been thinking about that," she said. "We can decoy the enemy into believing we have promptly moved away ourselves, while actually remaining. Brann was quite right about this being a good place to operate from. Attention is all on Crete, Anatolia, India. The Rangers think the destruction of those civilizations will hurt us severely. Well, let them continue to think so. Let them spend themselves in helping along an Indo-European conquest that is foredoomed to hap-

pen. Both sides have tended to forget the North."

Her cloak swirled as she strode. She smote fist into palm and cried: "Yes! Piece by piece, we'll withdraw forces hither. We can quietly organize this part of the world just as we please. There is no proof that we never did; the possibility stands gate-open. How much word will ever reach the South about the doings of barbarians in these far hinterlands? When the Bronze Age comes, it will bear *our* shape, furnish *us* men and goods, guard *Warden* bases. The final great futureward thrust may well be pivoted here!"

IN a blaze of energy, she turned to them and snapped forth orders. "As soon as may be, we shall have to develop native armed forces, strong enough to inhibit cultural meddling. Jusquo, consider ways and means and give me some suggestions tomorrow. Sparian, pull those Britishers out of their swinishness and organize them as a guard. But they're too conspicuous; we must not keep them any longer than need be. The gate in their country is unmanned, isn't it? Urio, pick a few of them and flit across; train them to stand sentry till the rest arrive. We might need such a bolthole. We certainly have to let Crete know we are here and arrange a con-

sultation. Radio and mindwave are too risky. Zarech and Nygis, prepare to flit there in person after dark. Chilon, start a program of acquiring detailed information about this entire region. Mareth, you may continue to oversee the work on Brann."

Something in their expressions spoke to her. She said impatiently, "Yes, yes, I know you have your places in the sixteenth century and don't feel competent here. Well, you must learn to feel otherwise. The Cretan base has all it can do. They can't spare us anyone until reorganization is well under way. If we stop to squeal for help, we give the enemy too much chance to discover what is happening."

The eighth Warden lifted his hand. "Yes, Hu?" Storm said.

"Are we not to inform our own era, brilliance?" the man asked deferentially.

"Of course. That news can go from Crete." The jade eyes narrowed. She laid fingers to chin and spoke softly. "You yourself will go home by a different route—with Malcolm."

"Huh?" Lockridge exclaimed.

"Don't you remember?" Mareth said. His lips writhed. "We have it recorded that he told you. You came and betrayed her to him."

"I—I—" Lockridge's mind whirled.

Storm moved near. He rose

She laid a hand on his shoulder and said: "Perhaps I've no right to demand this. But the fact cannot be evaded. One way or another, you will seek Brann in his chain of events that leads to his defeat. Be proud. It is not granted many to be destiny."

"But I don't know—I'm only a savage, next to him—or you—"

"One link in the chain is myself, bound in blindness," Storm whispered. "The scars will never leave my soul. Do you think I would not wish otherwise? But we have only the one road, and walk it we must. This is the last thing I ask of you, Malcolm, and the greatest. Afterward you may go to your own country. And I shall always remember you."

He clenched his fists. "Okay, Storm," he got out in English. "On your account."

Her smile, gentle and the least bit sad, was more thanks than he felt he deserved.

"Go out to the revels," she said. "Be happy while you can."

He bowed and stumbled away.

THE sun dazzled him. He did not want to join the fun, there was too much that had to be faced down. Instead he wandered off along the shore. Presently a hill was between him and the village. He stood alone and stared across the bay. Wavelets lapped the turf, gulls skimmed

white across blueness, a thrush whistled from the oak tree at his back.

"Lynx."

He turned. Auri walked toward him. Again she wore the garb of her people, bast skirt, foxskin purse, necklace of amber. Thereto had been added in honor the copper bracelet which was Echegon the headman's, wound tight to fit her wrist; and a dandelion garland made gold across the blowing sun-whitened hair. But her mouth was unsteady and tears blurred the sky-colored eyes.

"Why, what's the matter, little one? Why aren't you at the feast?"

She stopped beside him. Her head drooped. "I wanted to find you."

"I was around, except for when I was talking to The Storm. But you—" Now that he thought back, Lockridge realized that Auri had not danced or sung or gone with anyone to the greenwood. Instead, she hung about the fringes like a small disconsolate shadow. "What's wrong? I told everyone the curse was off you. Don't they believe me?"

"They do," she sighed. "After what has happened, they find me blessed. I didn't know a blessing could be so heavy."

Perhaps only because he did not want to dwell on his own

troubles, Lockridge sat down and let her cry on his breast. The story came out in broken words. Quite simply, her journey through the underworld had filled her with *mana*. She had become a vessel of unknown Powers. The Goddess must have singled her out for who could tell what. So who dared meddle with her? She wasn't shunned, or any such thing. Rather, she was revered. They would do whatever she asked, on the spot, except treat her like one of themselves.

"It . . . isn't . . . that they won't . . . love me. I could wait . . . for you . . . or someone else, if you really won't. But . . . when they see me . . . they stop laughing!"

"Poor kid," Lockridge murmured in the language of his mother. "Poor tyke. What a hell of a reward you got."

"Are you afraid of me, Lynx?"

"No, of course not. We've been through too much together."

Auri hugged him close. Face buried on his shoulder, she stammered, "If I were yours, they, they, they would know that was right. They would know this was the Goddess' will which had been fulfilled. I would have a place among them again. Would I not?"

He dared not confess she was

entirely correct. She would always have a special standing. But once her now unguessable destiny was no longer potential but actual, for the whole world to see, awe would be lost in ordinariness and she be granted plain, easy friendship.

"I don't think any other man will ever dare touch me," Auri said. "But that's best. I don't want anyone but you."

Damnation, you idiot! Lockridge raged at himself. Forget her age. She's no American high-schooler. She's seen birth and love and death her whole life, she's run free in woods where there are wolves and paddled skin boats through storms, she's ground grain with stones and dressed skins with her teeth, she's outlived sickness, North Sea winters, a war, a trip that'd have had most grown men gibberin'. Girl's younger than she is—and she's older than Shakespeare's Juliet—are already mothers. Can't you set aside your stupid inhibitions and do her this one kindness?

No. That day in the skiff, he had come very close to surrender. Now he faced dreadfulness. He could only hold to his course by keeping his mind filled with Storm. If he came back alive, he would demand as his payment that she let him forsake all else and follow her. He knew she was indifferent to what he might do

with any chance-met female. But he no longer was. He couldn't be.

"Auri," he said, cursing his own gaucherie, "my work is not done. I must depart soon, on Her business, and I don't know if I will ever return."

She gasped, clutched herself to him and wept until both their bodies shook. "Take me with you! Take me with you!"

A shadow fell across them. Lockridge looked up. Storm stood watching. She carried the

Wise Woman's staff, wreathed with hawthorn; she must have gone forth to bless the people now hers. Dark hair, dress of ocean, cloak of rain, fluttered in a sudden gust, around the tall form.

Her smile was unreadable, but not like the one she had bestowed on him in the Long House. "I think," she said with an edge to her tone, "I shall grant the child her wish."

(To be concluded next month)

COMING NEXT MONTH



Moderan is a plasti-coated world where metal men with flesh strips patrol the war rooms of their Strongholds and think deep Thoughts. It is a world created by David Bunch, and it is one of the most original, provocative, fascinating, and annoying worlds in s-f. The June AMAZING will feature Bunch's newest Moderan tale—one to make you think, fume, rant or simply run away: The Walking, Talking, I-Don't-Care Man.

Also in the next issue of AMAZING, Sam Moskowitz analyzes the rise and fall of the followers of Charles Fort, in Lo! the Poor Fortains.

The June AMAZING will be on sale at your newsstand May 6.

Tyranny isn't always the simple thing one would

like to think it is. For example, take . . .

THE MAN FROM PARTY TEN

By ROBERT ROHRER

KNOX looked over the sand dune at the four men who were walking up the hill in his direction. He ducked back down. They were too far away. Knox wanted them to be close enough for him to be sure before he opened up. He checked the action of his force-rifle again and then curled up against the warm sand and listened to the footsteps of the men.

The sky was beautiful. It was very blue, a cold blue, with no clouds. The sun was a cold white. The sand was red. Knox loved the sand and the sun and the sky with an intense emotion that he could feel in his throat. He loved the feel of the cold air in his nostrils and against his face and hands. He took a deep breath. He hugged his rifle and burrowed against the sand, running one of

his hands through the twinkling red grains that flowed between his fingers like solid water—

They were close enough now. Knox straightened and heaved himself belly-down across the ridge of the sand dune. Only two of the men were looking at him when he came over, so he tried to get them first. He shot at their middles. If he was lucky he would hit them in good places.

He was lucky with the first one. The head of the first one flew up into the air. It arched lazily back down toward the sand, turning lopsidedly in the frigid sunlight.

Knox forced himself to look away from the beauty of the flight of the head and to shoot at the second man. He was unlucky with the second man, and by now the other two had spot-

ted him, so he began pumping shots at the group as a whole. One man was hit twice in rapid succession and flew apart. Another's leg was shot off.

The last man got a shot off at Knox that was close and kicked sand into Knox's face. Sand got into Knox's eyes and he had to close them. He knew that the last man's next shot would be closer, so he began pulling the trigger of his rifle without trying to aim.

Blind he was very lucky. He made the last man scream and fall down. The man screamed all the time Knox was cleaning the sand from his eyes, and there were no more shots. When Knox could see again and walked down the slope to finish things, he saw why the man hadn't shot at him. He killed that man quickly, and was sorry he had been unable to see. The one with no leg had bled to death.

You're a lucky man, thought Knox. He looked up at the sky. It was still beautiful.

He began taking the dead men's canteens from their belts. The men had carried no food, only water. Food was scarce this time of year; Knox and his men needed food badly. Some of the men were talking of surrendering to the nobles. Knox had to find food, or the fighting and dying of five years would be nothing but so much dried blood.

He was lifting the last canteen

when out of the corner of his eye he saw something pop over the ridge above him. He fell on his side and whipped his rifle up toward the thing on the ridge in one motion.

The thing was a head. Knox could see only the forehead and the eyes, so he couldn't tell whether it was a girl's head or a boy's. A young voice said, "Are they all dead?"

"Come out where I can see you," said Knox, still frozen in the same uncomfortable position.

The head complied, and sprang awkwardly into full view. It was the head of a young girl. The girl was not more than twelve years old; her legs and arms still gangled, and she had no figure. She was a peasant; her clothes were of dull cloth and animal-hide, raggedly utilitarian. Her heavy dress was bound around her legs to keep out the cold. Her face, her hands, and what Knox could see of her body outlined beneath her clothes, were pitifully emaciated.

Knox lowered the rifle and rose. He had nothing to fear from a peasant. "They're dead," he said. "I killed them."

The girl smiled. "Good," she said. She was looking at Knox curiously. Then her eyes swelled as the realization came, and the question that needed no utterance filled her mouth. Being a

child, she gave the question voice. "Are you . . .?" she began.

"Yes," said Knox. He snapped the last canteen to his belt and began to trudge up the hill. "Do you have a house near here?"

The girl said breathlessly, "Yes, yes! Only over the next dune, my grandparents—" She danced away from him as he approached. She raised her hands tentatively, as though she wanted to touch Knox but was afraid to. She turned from him and looked back and said "Over here!" and ran ahead.

Knox shifted his knapsack on his shoulders and followed the girl as quickly as he could. The girl leaped out of sight over the next dune. He heard her shout, "Gramps! It's the Man, it's the Man—"

Then Knox topped the dune and saw the girl pulling an old, leather-jerkined man across the red sand from the door of a board shack. The old man stopped walking when he saw Knox. He squinted at Knox. The girl stopped pulling and looked apprehensively at her grandfather, suddenly afraid that he might not approve of the curiosity she had found and brought home.

Finally the old man nodded slowly. He said, "Yes." Knox walked toward him. "Woman!" the man called to the shack. "Come here!"

An old woman in a ragged cotton dress that had no color came to the door of the shack. Her eyes queried from her weather-browed face.

"It's the Man!" cried the old man. His excitement was close to the child's in its intensity. "It's the Man, woman, come and greet him!"

The woman smiled and walked stiffly to Knox. Her smile was twisted, but her eyes were warm. She took both of Knox's hands and kissed them.

"We heard the shooting," said the old man, laying a hand on his bent wife's shoulder.

"Soldiers of the nobles," said Knox. "I got these canteens from them. Do you need water?"

"We have a well, thank you," said the old man. "Or we would not be here. Will you eat with us?"

"The times are bad," said Knox, shaking his head.

The man chuckled and squeezed his wife's shoulder. "We can afford a visitor once in a while," he said. "And you—you especially are welcome here. It is an honor to have you share a meal with us."

The girl was wiggling up and down excitedly on the balls of her feet. Knox grinned. "Then I'll eat," he said. "I'm hungry enough about now."

They all laughed and went into the shack.

THE meal was small, but it was a feast to Knox. He hoped that the people would offer him food to take back to his men.

The old man was asking about the nobility. "Do they still demand pledges from the parties that come in?" he asked.

"There aren't any more parties," said Knox. "The companies all went bankrupt when the nobles refused to trade with Earth."

The old man's mouth fell open. "But why hasn't the government of Earth enforced our contract with the companies?" he asked.

Knox swallowed the last of his boiled potato. He said, "Because a war that wouldn't wipe the colony out completely would cost too much."

The old man shook his head and continued eating. In the silence that followed, the girl leaned forward excitedly, waited a moment, and finally said in a rush, "What's it like to be a rebel?"

Knox said, "You don't eat much." The old man chuckled. Then Knox saw that the girl was serious, so he said, "It isn't an easy or an attractive life. You must always be ready to do anything, no matter how unpleasant, that will facilitate your cause. You must do nothing, nothing that will place the reputation of your cause with the people in danger, or everything is lost. All

you do must be utilitarian. What you do many not be beautiful, but if it helps your cause, it's good."

"Have you killed many nobles?" asked the girl.

"Some," said Knox. "It's hard to kill them without being killed yourself."

"How long will it take you to kill them all?"

"I don't know. A long time. But I'm ready to fight them for a long time."

The girl suddenly turned to her grandfather. "Gramps, is it all right—may I . . . ?"

The old man nodded and grunted. The girl ran to a door at one end of the room.

"What's this?" Knox asked.

"It's a song," said the old man.

The girl returned with a stringed musical instrument that was old and had probably been made on Earth. She pulled her chair back from the table, sat, and angled her body over the instrument. The tune of what she sang followed the familiar lines and harmonies of the folk songs of the old world.

*There's a man now lives among
us who flew up in Party Ten,
And he's sworn the peasant-people to defend;
For he sees the people dying
And he hears the babies crying
And he's out to cut the fat
throats of those wicked noble-
men, men*

*Those wicked noble-men.
Oh, when the Party came to port
that day, the nobles stood in
wait,
And when Party Ten debarked
they locked the gates;
They said, "If you all will swear
"That faithful loyalty you'll bear
"To us nobles you will live, but if
not, death will be your fate,
fate
"Yes death will be your fate."*

*Now the people of that Party had
a hate for tyranny,
So they spat upon the nobles' vile
decree;
And the nobles shot their guns
At the fathers, mothers, sons,
And they thought they'd killed
them all, but they were wrong,
one got away, 'way,
One young man got away.*

*The one that got away had seen
his parents shot down dead,
But not a single tear did e'er he
shed;
He held his grief inside
Til to hate 'twas magnified
And he vowed to get those nobles
and to bathe their names in
red, red
To bathe their names blood-red.*

*Oh, he'll not lay down his gun
'til every noble's carcass
swings
Headless, naked in the gibbets'
iron rings;
Til the quislings of the rich*

*He's coated toe to head with
pitch
And the lot are hanging down
from ropes and slowly strang-
ling, til
They're slowly strang-ling.*

KNOX hadn't heard the song before, and he was pleased. He listened with a thin smile on his lips as the girl sang on into verses more explicitly abusive to the "nobles." She sang even the coarsest obscenities with a great, passionate hatred.

Every word of the ballad was true, of course. Knox had done everything attributed to him by it, and more. He intended to do exactly what it predicted he would do: overthrow the aristocracy and restore rule to the people. He knew in his heart that he could do this, he and his fifteen men. As he struck deeper and deeper into the heart of the tyrannical government, more and more peasants would join his band, until finally the self-styled "nobles" would be overwhelmed.

When the girl had finished, Knox said, "You sing very well. Did you write that?"

The girl blushed; her eyes jumped to Knox's shirt front and to the floor and back. She said, "Oh, no, oh, no, I heard it from a friend. Many people are singing it."

Many people. So, he was on the way already to becoming a leg-

end in his time. He had often thought of that possibility. It had helped to keep him going. The discovery that it was coming true sent a great warmth through his body.

The old man and woman were beaming. Knox said again, "You sing it very well."

The girl looked at the floor in confusion. The old man said gruffly, "Well, what do you say to the man who says you sing well?"

This made the girl look up to Knox's eyes and say, "Oh—thank you." Her face then became very red, and she rose awkwardly and ran from the room.

The old man laughed tolerantly. "She is young," he said.

Knox said, "She's growing. She'll be a very beautiful young woman."

The old man made a satisfied sound in his throat. The old woman had a half-smile set on her lips, as though she were remembering something that had happened long ago.

Suddenly the old man jerked from his reverie and said soberly to Knox, "Your men need food, don't they?"

Knox smiled. He had hoped for this. "Yes," he said. "They need it badly."

The old man looked at his wife. Knox saw no gestures pass between the two, but the old man turned back and nodded to Knox

as though the woman had approved. "Come," said the man.

Knox followed him to the dark end of the hut. The old man kicked a straw mat aside. There was a trap door where the mat had been. The man pulled the trap door open.

A small, crude cellar had been hollowed out in the sand beneath the floor. The walls of the cellar were made of stones that were held together with a brown-colored cement. The floor was a solid plank of wood.

There wasn't much food in the cellar. Slabs of salted meat hung down from hooks in the cross-beams under the floor of the shack, and plastic parcels lay in the corners. The storage space was not more than five feet deep. There wasn't much food there.

"We don't have much," said the old man, dropping clumsily into the space, "but . . ." He picked up three of the plastic parcels and unhooked one slab of meat and handed the food to Knox. The food was frozen. "Take it," said the man. "It's all we can spare and still live until the next harvest."

Knox said, "Thank you. You are good people."

The old woman shook her head slowly, and the man lifted himself noisily out of the pantry and stood up and closed the trap door. He said, "If we could give more,

(Continued on page 130)

THE SURVIVOR

By WALTER F. MOUDY

Illustrated by FINLAY

A new writer takes an old theme, and does a startling job of holding up a mirror to one of the wonders of our age: the cynical insensitivity (not to mention asininity) that passes for much of what we call television entertainment. Here is a story within a story, a moral within a moral.

THERE was a harmony in the design of the arena which an artist might find pleasing. The curved granite walls which extended upward three hundred feet from its base were polished and smooth like the sides of a bowl. A fly, perhaps a lizard, could crawl up those glistening walls—but surely not a man. The walls encircled an egg-shaped area which was precisely three thousand meters long and two thousand one hundred meters wide at its widest point. There were two large hills located on either side of the arena exactly mid-way from its center to its end. If you were to slice the arena cross-wise, your knife would dissect a third, tree studded hill and a small, clear lake; and the two divided halves would each be the exact mirror image of the other down to the smallest detail. If





you were a farmer you would notice the rich flat soil which ran obliquely from the two larger hills toward the lake. If you were an artist you might find pleasure in contemplating the rich shades of green and brown presented by the forested lowlands at the lake's edge. A sportsman seeing the crystalline lake in the morning's first light would find his fingers itching for light tackle and wading boots. Boys, particularly city boys, would yearn to climb the two larger hills because they looked easy to climb, but not too easy. A general viewing the topography would immediately recognize that possession of the central hill would permit dominance of the lake and the surrounding lowlands.

There was something peaceful about the arena that first morning. The early-morning sun broke through a light mist and spilled over the central hill to the low dew-drenched ground beyond. There were trees with young, green leaves, and the leaves rustled softly in rhythm with the wind. There were birds in those trees, and the birds still sang, for it was spring, and they were filled with the joy of life and the beauty of the morning. A night owl, its appetite satiated now by a recent kill, perched on a dead limb of a large sycamore tree and, tucking its beak in its feathers, prepared to sleep the day away.

A sleek copperhead snake, sensing the sun's approach and anticipating its soothing warmth, crawled from beneath the flat rock where it had spent the night and sought the comfort of its favorite rock ledge. A red squirrel chattered nervously as it watched the men enter the arena from the north and then, having decided that there was danger there, darted swiftly to an adjacent tree and disappeared into the security of its nest.

There were exactly one hundred of them. They stood tall and proud in their uniforms, a barely perceptible swaying motion rippling through their lines like wheat stirred by a gentle breeze. If they anticipated what was to come, they did not show it. Their every movement showed their absolute discipline. Once they had been only men—now they were killers. The hunger for blood was like a taste in their mouths; their zest for destruction like a flood which raged inside them. They were finely honed and razor keen to kill.

THEIR general made his last inspection. As he passed down the lines the squad captains barked a sharp order and the men froze into absolute immobility. Private Richard Starbuck heard the rasp of the general's boots against the stones as he approached. There was no other

sound, not even of men breathing. From long discipline he forced his eyes to maintain their focus on the distant point he had selected, and his eyes did not waiver as the general paused in front of him. They were still fixed on that same imaginary point. He did not even see the general.

Private Richard Starbuck was not thinking of death, although he knew he must surely die. He was thinking of the rifle which he felt securely on his shoulder and of the driving need he had to discharge its deadly pellets into human flesh. His urge to kill was dominant, but even so he was vaguely relieved that he had not been selected for the assassination squad (the suicide squad the men called it); for he still had a chance, a slim chance, to live; while the assassination squad was consigned to inevitable death.

A command was given and Private Starbuck permitted his tense body to relax. He glanced at his watch. Five twenty-five. He still had an hour and thirty-five minutes to wait. There was a tenseness inside him which his relaxed body did not disclose. They taught you how to do that in training. They taught you lots of things in training.

* * *

The TV screen was bigger than

life and just as real. The color was true and the images three dimensional. For a moment the zoom cameras scanned the silent deserted portions of the arena. The sound system was sensitive and sharp and caught the sound made by a squirrel's feet against the bark of a black oak tree. Over one hundred cameras were fixed on the arena; yet so smooth was the transition from one camera to the next that it was as though the viewer was floating over the arena. There was the sound of marching feet, and the pace of the moving cameras quickened and then shifted to the north where one hundred men were entering the arena in perfect unison, a hundred steel-toed boots striking the earth as one. For a moment the cameras fixed on the flashing boots and the sensitive sound system recorded the thunder of men marching to war. Then the cameras flashed to the proud face of their general; then to the hard, determined faces of the men; then back again to the thundering boots. The cameras backed off to watch the column execute an abrupt halt, moved forward to focus for a moment on the general's hawk-like face, and then, with the general, inspected the troops one by one, moving down the rigid lines of men and peering intently at each frozen face.

When the "at ease" order was

given, the camera backed up to show an aerial view of the arena and then fixed upon one of the control towers which lined the arena's upper periphery before sweeping slowly downward and seeming to pass into the control tower. Inside the tower a distinguished grey-haired man in his mid-forties sat beside a jovial, fat jawed man who was probably in his early fifties. There was an expectant look on their faces. Finally the grey-haired man said:

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, I'm John Ardanyon—"

"And I'm Bill Carr," the fat-jawed man said.

"And this is it—yes, this is the big one, ladies and gentlemen. The 2050 edition of the Olympic War Games. This is the day we've all been waiting for, ladies and gentlemen, and in precisely one hour and thirty-two minutes the games will be under way. Here to help describe the action is Bill Carr who is known to all of you sports fans all over the world. And with us for this special broadcast are some of the finest technicians in the business. Bill?"

"That's right, John. This year NSB has spared no expense to insure our viewing public that its 2050 game coverage will be second to none. So stay tuned to this station for the most complete, the most immediate coverage of any station. John?"

"That's right, Bill. This year NSB has installed over one hundred specially designed zoom cameras to insure complete coverage of the games. We are using the latest sonic sound equipment—so sensitive that it can detect the sound of a man's heart beating at a thousand yards. Our camera crew is highly trained in the recently developed transitional zone technique which you just saw so effectively demonstrated during the fade in. I think we can promise you that this time no station will be able to match the immediacy of NSB."

"Right, John. And now, less than an hour and a half before the action begins, NSB is proud to bring you this pre-recorded announcement from the President of the United States. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States."

THERE was a brief flash of the White House lawn, a fade out, and then:

"My fellow countrymen. When you hear these words, the beginning of the fifth meeting between the United States and Russia in the Olympic War Games will be just minutes away.

"I hope and I pray that we will be victorious. With the help of God, we shall be.

"But in our longing for victory, we must not lose sight of the primary purpose of these

games. In the long run it is not whether we win or lose but that the games were played. For, my fellow citizens, we must never forget that these games are played in order that the frightening spectre of war may never again stalk our land. It is better that a few should decide the nation's fate, than all the resources of our two nations should be mobilized to destroy the other.

"My friends, many of you do not remember the horror of the Final War of 1998. I can recall that war. I lost my father and two sisters in that war. I spent two months in a class two fallout shelter—as many of you know. There must never be another such war. We cannot—we shall not—permit that to happen.

"The Olympic War Games are the answer—the only answer. Thanks to the Olympic War Games we are at peace. Today one hundred of our finest fighting men will meet one hundred Russian soldiers to decide whether we shall be victorious or shall go down to defeat. The loser must pay the victor reparations of ten billion dollars. The stakes are high.

"The stakes are high, but, my fellow citizens, the cost of total war is a hundred times higher. This miniature war is a thousand times less costly than total war. Thanks to the Olympic War Games, we have a kind of peace.

"And now, in keeping with the tradition established by the late President Goldstein, I hereby declare a national holiday for all persons not engaged in essential services from now until the conclusion of the games.

"To those brave men who made the team I say: the hope and the prayers of the nation go with you. May you emerge victorious."

There was a fade out and then the pleasant features of John Ardanyon appeared. After a short, respectful silence, he said:

"I'm sure we can all agree with the President on that. And now, here is Professor Carl Overmann to explain the computer system developed especially for NSB's coverage of the 2050 war games."

"Thank you, Mr. Ardanyon. This year, with the help of the Englewood system of evaluating intangible factors, we hope to start bringing you reliable predictions at the ten percent casualty level. Now, very briefly, here is how the Englewood system works. . . ."

PPRIVATE Richard Starbuck looked at his watch. Still forty more minutes to wait. He pulled back the bolt on his rifle and checked once more to make sure that the first shell was properly positioned in the chamber. For the third time in the past twenty minutes he walked to one side

and urinated on the ground. His throat seemed abnormally dry, and he removed his canteen to moisten his lips with water. He took only a small swallow because the rules permitted only one canteen of water per man, and their battle plan did not call for early possession of the lake.

A passing lizard caught his attention. He put his foot on it and squashed it slowly with the toe of his right boot. He noticed with mild satisfaction that the thing had left a small blood smear at the end of his boot. Oddly, however, seeing the blood triggered something in his mind, and for the first time he vaguely recognized the possibility that he could be hurt. In training he had not thought much about that. Mostly you thought of how it would feel to kill a man. After a while you got so that you wanted to kill. You came to love your rifle, like it was an extension of your own body. And if you could not feel its comforting presence, you felt like a part of you was missing. Still a person could be hurt. You might not die immediately. He wondered what it would be like to feel a misshapen chunk of lead tearing through his belly. The Russians would x their bullets too probably. They do more damage that way.

It might not be so bad. He remembered a time four years ago when he had thought he was dy-

ing, and that had not been so bad. He remembered that at the time he had been more concerned about bleeding on the Martin's new couch. The Martins had always been good to him. Once they had thought they could never have a child of their own, and they had about half adopted him because his own mother worked and was too busy to bake cookies for him and his father was not interested in fishing or basketball or things like that. Even after the Martins had Cassandra, they continued to treat him like a favorite nephew. Mr. Martin took him fishing and attended all the basketball games when he was playing. And that was why when he wrecked the motor scooter and cut his head, he had been more concerned about bleeding on the Martin's new couch than about dying, although he had felt that he was surely dying. He remembered that his first thought upon regaining consciousness was one of self importance. The Martins had looked worried and their nine-year old daughter, Cassandra, was looking at the blood running down his face and was crying. That was when he felt he might be dying. Dying had seemed a strangely appropriate thing to do, and he had felt an urge to do it well and had begun to assure them that he was all right. And, to his slight disappointment, he was.

Private Richard Starbuck, formerly a star forward on the Center High basketball team, looked at his watch and wondered, as he waited, if being shot in the gut would be anything like cutting your head on the pavement. It was funny he should have thought of that now. He hadn't thought of the Martins for months. He wondered if they would be watching. He wondered, if they did, if they would recognize the sixteen year old boy who had bled on their living room couch four years ago. He wondered if he recognized that sixteen year old boy himself.

PROFESSOR Carl Overmann had finished explaining the marvels of the NSB computer system; a mousy little man from the sociology department of a second rate university had spent ten minutes assuring the TV audience that one of the important psychological effects of the TV coverage of the games was that it allowed the people to satisfy the innate blood lust vicariously and strongly urged the viewers to encourage the youngsters to watch; a minister had spent three minutes explaining that the miniature war could serve to educate mankind to the horrors of war; an economics professor was just finishing a short lecture on the economic effects of victory or defeat.

"Well, there you have it, ladies and gentlemen," Bill Carr said when the economics professor had finished. "You all know there's a lot at stake for both sides. And now—what's that? You what? Just a minute, folks. I think we may have another NSB first." He looked off camera to his right. "Is he there? Yes, indeed, ladies and gentlemen, NSB has done it again. For the first time we are going to have—well, here he is, ladies and gentlemen, Lt. General George W. Caldwell, chief of the Olympic War Games training section. General, it's nice to have you with us."

"Thank you, Bill. It's good to be here."

"General, I'm sure our audience already knows this, but just so there will be no misunderstanding, it's not possible for either side to communicate to their people in the arena now. Is that right?"

"That's right, Bill, or I could not be here. An electronic curtain, as it were, protects the field from any attempt to communicate. From here on out the boys are strictly on their own."

"General, do you care to make any predictions on the outcome of the games?"

"Yes, Bill, I may be going out on a limb here, but I think our boys are ready. I can't say that I agree with the neutral money boys who have the United States

a 6 to 5 underdog. I say we'll win."

"General, there is some thought that our defeat in the games four years ago was caused by an inferior battle plan. Do you care to comment on that?"

"No comment."

"Do you have any explanation for why the United States team has lost the last two games after winning the first two?"

"Well, let me say this. Our defeat in forty-two could well have been caused by over confidence. After all we had won the first two games rather handily. As I recall we won the game in thirty-eight by four survivors. But as for our defeat in forty-six—well, your estimate on that one is as good as mine. I will say this: General Hanley was much criticized for an unimaginative battle plan by a lot of so-called experts. Those so-called experts—those arm chair generals—were definitely wrong. General Hanley's battle strategy was sound in every detail. I've studied his plans at considerable length, I can assure you."

"Perhaps the training program—?"

"Nonsense. My own exec was on General Hanley's training staff. With only slight modifications it's the same program we used for this year's games."

"Do you care to comment on your own battle plans, General?"

"Well, Bill, I wouldn't want to kill the suspense for your TV audience. But I can say this: we'll have a few surprises this year. No one can accuse us of conservative tactics, I can tell you that."

"How do you think our boys will stack up against the Russians, General?"

"Bill, on a man to man basis, I think our boys will stack up very well indeed. In fact, we had men in the drop out squads who could have made our last team with no trouble at all. I'd say this year's crop is probably twenty per cent improved."

"General, what do you look for in selecting your final squads?"

"Bill, I'd say that more than anything else we look for desire. Of course, a man has to be a good athlete, but if he doesn't have that killer instinct, as we say, he won't make the team. I'd say it's desire."

"Can you tell us how you pick the men for the games?"

"Yes, Bill, I think I can, up to a point. We know the Russians use the same system, and, of course, there has been quite a bit written on the subject in the popular press in recent months."

"Naturally, we get thousands of applicants. We give each of them a tough screening test—physical, mental, and psychological. Most applicants are eliminated in the first test. You'd be

surprised at some of the boys who apply. The ones who are left—just under two thousand for this year's games—are put through an intensive six month training course. During this training period we begin to get our first drop outs, the men who some how got past our screening system, and who will crack up under pressure.

"Next comes a year of training in which the emphasis is on conditioning."

"Let me interrupt here for just a moment, General, if I may. This conditioning—is this a type of physical training?"

The general smiled tolerantly. "No, Bill, this is a special type of conditioning—both mental and physical. The men are conditioned to war. They are taught to recognize and to hate the enemy. They are taught to react instantly to every possible hostile stimuli. They learn to love their weapons and to distrust all else."

"I take it that an average training day must leave the men very little free time."

"Free time!" The general now seemed more shocked than amused. "Free time indeed. Our training program leaves no time free. We don't coddle our boys. After all, Bill, these men are training for war. No man is permitted more than two hours consecutive sleep. We have an average of four alerts every night.

"Actually the night alerts are an important element in our selection as well as our training program. We have the men under constant observation, of course. You can tell a lot about how a man responds to an alert. Of course, all of the men are conditioned to come instantly awake with their rifles in their hands. But some would execute a simultaneous roll-away movement while at the same time cocking and aiming their weapons in the direction of the hostile sound which signalled the alert."

"How about the final six months, General?"

"Well, Bill, of course, I can't give away all our little tricks during those last six months. I can tell you in a general sort of way that this involved putting battle plans on a duplicate of the arena itself."

"And these hundred men who made this year's team—I presume they were picked during the last six months training?"

"No, Bill, actually we only made our final selection last night. You see for the first time in two years these men have had some free time. We give them two days off before the games begin. How the men react to this enforced inactivity can tell us a lot about their level of readiness. I can tell you we have an impatient bunch of boys out there."

"General, it's ten minutes to

game time. Do you suppose our team may be getting a little nervous down there?"

"Nervous? I suppose the boys may be a little tensed up. But they'll be all right just as soon as the action starts."

"General, I want to thank you for coming by. I'm sure our TV audience has found this brief discussion most enlightening."

"It was my pleasure, Bill."

WELL, there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. You heard it from the man who should know—Lt. General George W. Caldwell himself. He picks the United States team to go all the way. John?"

"Thank you, Bill. And let me say that there has been considerable sentiment for the United States team in recent weeks among the neutrals. These are the men who set the odds—the men who bet their heads but never their hearts. In fact at least one oddsmaker in Stockholm told me last night that he had stopped taking anything but 6 to 5 bets and you pick 'em. In other words, this fight is rated just about even here just a few minutes before game time."

"Right, John, it promises to be an exciting day, so stay tuned to this station for full coverage."

"I see the troops are beginning to stir. It won't be long now. Bill, while we wait I think it might be

well, for the benefit of you younger people, to tell the folks just what it means to be a survivor in one of these games. Bill?"

"Right, John. Folks the survivor, or survivors as the case may be, will truly become a *Survivor*. A *Survivor*, as most of you know, is exempt from all laws; he has unlimited credit; in short, he can literally do no wrong. And that's what those men are shooting for today. John."

"Ok, Bill. And now as our cameras scan the Russian team, let us review very briefly the rules of the game. Each side has one hundred men divided into ten squads each consisting of nine men and one squad captain. Each man has a standard automatic rifle, four hand grenades, a canteen of water, and enough food to last three days. All officers are armed with side arms in addition to their automatic rifles. Two of the squads are armed with air-cooled light machine guns, and one squad is armed with a mortar with one thousand rounds of ammunition. And those, ladies and gentlemen, are the rules of the game. Once the games begin the men are on their own. There are no more rules—except, of course, that the game is not over until one side or the other has no more survivors. John?"

"Okay, Bill. Well, folks, here we are just seconds away from

game time. NSB will bring you live each exciting moment—so stand by. We're waiting for the start of the 2050 Olympic War Games. Ten seconds now. Six. Four, three, two, one—the games are underway, and look at 'em go!"

The cameras spanned back from the arena to give a distant view of the action. Squad one peeled off from the main body and headed toward the enemy rear at a fast trot. They were armed with rifles and grenades. Squads two, three, and four went directly toward the high hill in the American sector where they broke out entrenching tools and began to dig in. Squads five and six took one of the light machine guns and marched at double time to the east of the central hill where they concealed themselves in the brush and waited. Squads seven through ten were held in reserve where they occupied themselves by burying the ammunition and other supplies at pre-determined points and in beginning the preparation of their own defense perimeters.

The cameras swung briefly to the Russian sector. Four Russian squads had already occupied the high hill in the Russian sector, and a rifle squad was being rushed to the central hill located on the north-south dividing line. A Russian machine gun squad was digging in to the south of

the lake to establish a base of fire on the north side of the central hill.

THE cameras returned to the American squads five and six which were now deployed along the east side of the central hill. The cameras moved in from above the entrenched machine gunner, paused momentarily on his right hand which was curved lovingly around the trigger guard while his middle finger stroked the trigger itself in a manner almost obscene, and then followed the gunner's unblinking eyes to the mist enshrouded base of the central hill where the point man of the Russian advance squad was cautiously testing his fate in a squirming, crawling advance on the lower slopes of the hill.

"This could be it!" Bill Carr's booming voice exploded from the screen like a shot. "This could be the first skirmish, ladies and gentlemen. John, how does it look to you?"

"Yes, Bill, it looks like we will probably get our first action in the east-central sector. Quite a surprise, too, Bill. A lot of experts felt that the American team would concentrate its initial push on control of the central hill. Instead, the strategy appears to be—at least as it appears from here—to concede the central hill to the Russian team but to make them pay for it. You can't see it

on your screens just now, ladies and gentlemen, but the American mortar squad is now positioned on the north slope of the north hill and is ready to fire."

"All right, John. Folks, here in our booth operating as spotter for the American team is Colonel Bullock of the United States Army. Our Russian spotter is Brig. General Vorsilov who will from time to time give us his views on Russian strategy. Colonel Bullock, do you care to comment?"

"Well, I think it's fairly obvious, Bill, that—"

His words were interrupted by the first chilling chatter of the American light machine gun. Tracer bullets etched their brilliant way through the morning air to seek and find human flesh. Four mortar rounds, fired in rapid succession, arched over the low hill and came screaming a tale of death and destruction. The rifle squad opened fire with compelling accuracy. The Russian line halted, faltered, reformed, and charged up the central hill. Three men made it to the sheltering rocks on the hill's upper slope. The squad captain and six enlisted men lay dead or dying on the lower slopes. As quickly as it had begun the firing ended.

"How about that!" Bill Carr exclaimed. "First blood for the American team. What a fantas-

tic beginning to these 2050 war games, ladies and gentlemen. John, how about that?"

"Right, Bill. Beautifully done. Brilliantly conceived and executed with marvelous precision. An almost unbelievable maneuver by the American team that obviously caught the Russians completely off guard. Did you get the casualty figures on that first skirmish, Bill?"

"I make it five dead, and two seriously wounded, John. Now keep in mind, folks, these figures are unofficial. Ed, can you give us a close up on that south slope?"

THE cameras scanned the hill first from a distance and then zoomed in to give a close up of each man who lay on the bleak southern slope. The Russian captain was obviously dead with a neat rifle bullet through his forehead. The next man appeared to be sleeping peacefully. There was not a mark visible on his body; yet he too was dead as was demonstrated when the delicate sonic sound system was focused on his corpse without disclosing the whisper of a heart beat. The third man was still living although death was just minutes away. For him it would be a peaceful death, for he was unconscious and was quietly leaking his life away from a torn artery in his neck. The camera rested next upon the shredded

corpse of the Russian point man who had been the initial target for so many rifles. He lay on his stomach, and there were nine visible wounds in his back. The camera showed next a close up view of a young man's face frozen in the moment of death, blue eyes, lusterless now and pale in death, framed by a face registering the shock of war's ultimate reality, his lips half opened still as if to protest his fate or to ask for another chance. The camera moved next to a body lying fetal-like near the top of the hill hardly two steps from the covering rocks where the three surviving squad members had found shelter. The camera then moved slowly down the slope seeking the last casualty. It found him on a pleasant, grassy spot beneath a small oak tree. A mortar fragment had caught him in the lower belly and his guts were spewed out on the grass like an overturned bucket of sand. He was whimpering softly, and with his free left hand was trying with almost comic desperation to place his entrails back inside his belly.

"Well, there you have it, folks," Bill Carr said. "It's official now. You saw it for yourselves thanks to our fine camera technicians. Seven casualties confirmed. John, I don't believe the American team has had its first casualty yet, is that right?"

"That's right, Bill. The Russian team apparently was caught completely off guard."

"Colonel Bullock, would you care to comment on what you've seen so far?"

"Yes, Bill, I think it's fair to say that this first skirmish gives the American team a decided advantage. I would like to see the computer's probability reports before going too far out on a limb, but I'd say the odds are definitely in favor of the American team at this stage. General Caldwell's election not to take the central hill has paid a handsome dividend here early in the games."

"General Vorsilov, would you care to give us the Russian point of view?"

"I do not agree with my American friend, Colonel Bullock," the general said with a crisp, British accent. "The fourth Russian squad was given the mission to take the central hill. The central hill has been taken and is now controlled by the Russian team. Possession of the central hill provides almost absolute dominance of the lake and surrounding low land. Those of you who have studied military history know how important that can be, particularly in the later stages of the games. I emphatically do not agree that the first skirmish was a defeat. Possession of the hill is worth a dozen men."

"Comments Colonel Bullock?"

"Well, Bill, first of all, I don't agree that the Russian team has possession of the hill. True they have three men up there, but those men are armed with nothing but rifles and hand grenades—and they are not dug in. Right now the central hill is up for grabs. I—"

"Just a minute, Colonel. Pardon this interruption, but our computer has the first probability report. And here it is! The prediction is for an American victory with a probability rating of 57.2. How about that, folks? Here early in the first day the American team, which was a decided underdog in this year's games has jumped to a substantial lead."

Colonel Bullock spoke: "Bill, I want you to notice that man there—over there on the right hand side of your screen. Can we have a close up on that? That's a runner, Bill. A lot of the folks don't notice little things like that. They want to watch the machine gunners or the point man, but that man there could have a decided effect on the outcome of these games, Bill."

"I presume he's carrying a message back to headquarters, eh Colonel?"

"That's right, Bill, and a very important message, I'll warrant. You see an attack on the central hill from the east or south sides

would be disastrous. The Russians, of course, hold the north hill. From their positions there they could subject our boys to a blistering fire from the rear on any attack made from the south. That runner was sent back with word that there are only three Russians on the hill. I think we can expect an immediate counter-attack from the north as soon as the message has been delivered. In the meantime squads five and six will maintain their positions in the eastern sector and try to prevent any reinforcements of the Russian position."

"Thank you, Colonel, for that enlightening analysis, and now, folks—" He broke off when the runner to whom the Colonel referred stumbled and fell.

"Wait a minute, folks. He's been hit! He's down! The runner has been shot. You saw it here, folks. Brilliant camera work. Simply great. John, how about that?"

"Simply tremendous, Bill. A really great shot. Ed, can we back the cameras up and show the folks that action again? Here it is in slow motion, folks. Now you see him (who is that, Colonel? Ted Krogan? Thank you, Colonel) here he is, folks, Private Ted Krogan from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Here he is coming around the last clump of bushes—now watch this, folks—he gets about half way across the

clearing—and there it is, folks, you can actually see the bullet strike his throat—a direct hit. Watch this camera close up of his face, you'll see him die in front of your eyes. And there he goes—he rolls over and not a move. He was dead before he hit the ground. Bill, did any of our cameras catch where that shot came from?"

"Yes, John, the Russians have slipped a two man sniper team in on our left flank. This could be serious, John. I don't think our boys know the runner was hit."

"Only time will tell, Bill. Only time will tell. Right now, I believe we have our first lull. Let's take thirty seconds for our stations to identify themselves."

PPRIVATE Richard Starbuck's first day was not at all what he had expected. He was with the second squad, one of the three squads which were dug in on the north hill. After digging his fox hole he had spent the day staring at the south and central hills. He had heard the brief skirmish near the central hill, but he had yet to see his first Russian. He strained so hard to see something that some times his eyes played tricks on him. Twice his mind gave movement to a distant shadow. Once he nearly fired at the sudden sound of a rabbit in the brush. His desire to see the enemy was almost overpowering.

It reminded him of the first time Mr. Martin had taken him fishing on the lake. He had been thirteen at the time. He had stared at that still, white cork for what had seemed like hours. He remembered he had even prayed to God to send a fish along that would make the cork go under. His mind had played tricks on him that day too, and several times he had fancied the cork was moving when it was not. He was not praying today, of course—except the intensity of his desire was something like a prayer.

He spent the entire first day in a fox hole without seeing anything or hearing anything except an occasional distant sniper's bullet. When the sun went down, he brought out his rations and consumed eighteen hundred calories. As soon as it was dark, his squad was to move to the south slope and prepare their defensive positions. He knew the Russians would be similarly occupied. It was maddening to know that for a time the enemy would be exposed and yet be relatively safe because of the covering darkness.

When it was completely dark, his squad captain gave the signal, and the squad moved out to their pre-determined positions and began to dig in. So far they were still following the battle plan to the letter. He dug his fox

hole with care, building a small ledge half way down on which to sit and placing some foliage on the bottom to keep it from becoming muddy, and then he settled down to wait. Somehow it was better at night. He even found himself wishing that they would not come tonight. He discovered that he could wait.

LATER he slept. How long he did not know. He only knew that when he awoke he heard a sound of air parting followed by a hard, thundering impact that shook the ground. His first instinct was to action, and then he remembered that there was nothing he could do, so he hunched down as far as possible in his fox hole and waited. He knew real fear now—the kind of fear that no amount of training or conditioning can eliminate. He was a living thing whose dominant instinct was to continue living. He did not want to die hunched down in a hole in the ground. The flesh along his spine quivered involuntarily with each fractional warning whoosh which preceded the mortar's fall. Now he knew that he could die, knew it with his body as well as with his mind. A shell landed nearby, and he heard a shrill, woman-like scream. Bill Smith had been hit. His first reaction was one of relief. It had been Bill Smith and not he. But why did he have to

scream? Bill Smith had been one of the toughest men in the squad. There ought to be more dignity than that. There ought to be a better way of dying than lying helpless in a hole and waiting for chance or fate in the form of some unseen, impersonal gunner, who probably was firing an assigned pattern anyhow, to bring you life or death.

In training, under conditions of simulated danger, he had grown to rely upon the solidarity of the squad. They faced danger together; together they could whip the world. But now he knew that in the end war was a lonely thing. He could not reach out into the darkness and draw courage from the huddled forms of his comrades from the second squad. He took no comfort from the fact that the other members of the squad were just as exposed as he. The fear which he discovered in himself was a thing which had to be endured alone, and he sensed now that when he died, that too would have to be endured alone.

* * *

"Well, folks, this is Bill Carr still bringing you our continuous coverage of the 2050 Olympic War Games. John Ardanyon is getting a few hours sleep right now, but he'll be back at four o'clock.

"For the benefit of those view-

ers who may have tuned in late, let me say again that NSB will bring continuous coverage. Yes sir, folks, this year, thanks to our special owl-eye cameras, we can give you shots of the night action with remarkable clarity.

"Well, folks, the games are almost eighteen hours old, and here to bring you the latest casualty report is my old friend Max Sanders. Max?"

"Thank you, Bill, and good evening ladies and gentlemen. The latest casualty reports—and these are confirmed figures. Let me repeat—these are confirmed figures. For the Russian team: twenty-two dead, and eight incapacitated wounded. For the American team: seventeen dead, and only six incapacitated wounded."

"Thank you, Max. Folks, our computer has just recomputed the odds, and the results are—what's this? Folks, here is a surprise. A rather unpleasant surprise. Just forty-five minutes ago the odds on an American victory were 62.1. Those odds, ladies and gentlemen, have just fallen to 53.0. I'm afraid I don't understand this at all. Professor Overmann, what do you make of this?"

"I'm afraid the computer has picked up a little trouble in the southwestern sector, Bill. As I explained earlier, the computer's estimates are made up of many

factors—and the casualty reports are just one of them. Can you give us a long shot of the central hill, Ed? There. There you see one of the factors which undoubtedly has influenced the new odds. The Russian team has succeeded in reinforcing their position on the central hill with a light machine gun squad. This goes back to the first American casualty earlier today when the messenger failed to get word through for the counter-attack.

"Now give me a medium shot of the American assassination squad. Back it up a little more, will you, Ed? There, that's it. I was afraid of that. What has happened, Bill, is that, unknowingly, the American squad has been spotted by a Russian reserve guard. That could mean trouble."

"I see. Well, that explains the sudden drop in the odds, folks. Now the question is: can the American assassination squad pull it off under this handicap? We'll keep the cameras over here, folks, until we have an answer. The other sectors are relatively quiet now except for sporadic mortar fire."

FOR the first time since the skirmish which had begun the battle, the cameras were able to concentrate their sustained attention on one small area of the arena. The assassination squad

moved slowly, torturously slow, through the brush and the deep grass which dotted the southwest sector. They had successfully infiltrated the Russian rear. For a moment the camera switched to the Russian sentry who had discovered the enemy's presence and who was now reporting to his captain. Orders were given and in a very few minutes the light machine gun had been brought back from the lake and was in position to fire on the advancing American squad. Two Russian reserve squads were positioned to deliver a deadly cross fire on the patrol. To the men in the arena it must have been pitch dark. Even on camera there was an eerie, uneasy quality to the light that lent a ghost-like effect to the faces of the men whose fates had been determined by an unsuspected meeting with a Russian sentry. Death would have been exceedingly quick and profitless for the ten man squad had not a Russian rifleman fired his rifle prematurely. As it was the squad captain and six men were killed in the first furious burst of fire. The three survivors reacted instantly and disappeared into the brush. One died there noiselessly from a chest wound inflicted in the ambush. Another managed to kill two Russian infantrymen with hand grenades before he died. In the darkness the Russian captain became con-

fused and sent word to his general that the entire squad had been destroyed. The general came to inspect the site and was instantly killed at short range by the lone surviving member of the assassination squad. By a series of fortuitous events the squad had accomplished its primary purpose. The Russian general was dead, and in less than two seconds so was the last man in the assassination squad.

"Well, there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. High drama here in the early hours of the morning as an American infantry squad cuts down the Russian general. Those of you who have watched these games before will know that some of the most exciting action takes place at night. In a few minutes we should have the latest probability report, but until then, how do you see it, Colonel Bullock?"

"Bill, I think the raiding squad came out of that very well indeed. They were discovered and boxed in by the enemy, yet they still fulfilled their primary mission—they killed the Russian general. It's bound to have an effect."

"General Vorsilov, do you care to comment, sir?"

"I think your computer will confirm that three for ten is a good exchange, even if one of those three happens to be a general. Of course, we had an un-

lucky break when one of our soldiers accidentally discharged his weapon. Otherwise we would have suffered no casualties. As for the loss of General Sarlov, no general has ever survived the games, and I venture to say no general ever will. The leadership of the Russian team will now descend by pre-determined selection to the senior Russian captain."

"Thank you, general. Well, folks, here is the latest computer report. This is going to disappoint a lotta people. For an American victory, the odds now stand at 49.1. Of course, let me emphasize, folks, that such a small difference at this stage is virtually meaningless.

"Well, we seem to have another lag, folks. While our cameras scan the arena, let me remind you that each morning of the games NSB will be bringing you a special capsule re-run of the highlights of the preceding night's action.

"Well, folks, things seem to be a little quiet right now, but don't go away. In the games, anything can happen and usually does. We lost ten good men in that last action, so maybe this is a good time to remind you ladies and gentlemen that this year NSB is giving to the parents of each one of these boys a special tape recording of the action in the arena complete with sound effects and

a brand new uniflex projector. Thus each parent will be able to see their son's participation in the games. This is a gift that I'm sure will be treasured throughout the years.

"NSB would like to take this opportunity to thank the following sponsors for relinquishing their time so we could bring you this special broadcast. . . ."

PPRIVATE Richard Starbuck watched the dawn edge its way over the arena. He had slept perhaps a total of two hours last night, and already a feeling of unreality was invading his senses. When the roll was called, he answered with a voice which surprised him by its impersonalness: "Private Richard Starbuck, uninjured, ammunition expended; zero." Three men did not answer the roll. One of the three was the squad captain. That meant that Sargeant Collins was the new squad captain. Through discipline and habit he broke out his breakfast ration and forced himself to eat. Then he waited again.

Later that morning he fired his first shot. He caught a movement on the central hill, and this time it was not a shadow. He fired quickly, but he missed, and his target quickly disappeared. There was heavy firing in the mid-eastern sector, but he was no longer even curious as to what

was going on unless it affected his own position. All day long he fired whenever he saw something that could have been a man on either of the Russian held hills. Sometimes he fired when he saw nothing because it made him feel better. The Russians returned the fire, but neither side appeared to be doing any real damage against a distant, well-entrenched enemy.

Toward evening Captain Collins gave orders for him to take possession of Private Bill Smith's fox hole. It seemed like a ridiculous thing to do in broad day light when in a couple more hours he could accomplish the same thing in almost perfect safety. They obviously intended for him to draw fire to expose the Russian positions. For a moment he hesitated, feeling the hate for Collins wash over him like a flood. Then he grasped his rifle, leaped from his hole, and ran twenty yards diagonally down the hill to Smith's fox hole. It seemed to him as if the opposing hills had suddenly come alive. He flung himself face first to the ground and landed grotesquely on top of the once tough body of Private Bill Smith. He felt blood trickling down his arm, and for a moment he thought he had been hit, but it was only a scratch from a projecting rock. His own squad had been firing heavily, and he heard some one say: "I

got one. B'god I got one." He twisted around in the fox hole trying to keep his head safely below the surface, and then he saw what it was that had made Bill Smith scream. The mortar had wrenched his left arm loose at the elbow. It dangled there now, hung in place only by a torn shirt and a small piece of skin. He braced himself and began to edge the body up past him in the fox hole. He managed to get below it and heave it over the side. He heard the excited volley of shots which followed the body's tumbling course down the hill. Somehow in his exertions he had finished wrenching the arm loose from the body. He reached down and threw that too over the side of the fox hole. And now this particular bit of earth belonged to him. He liked it better than his last one. He felt he had earned it.

The night brought a return of the mortar fire. This time he didn't care. This time he could sleep, although there was a slight twitching motion on the left side of his face and he woke up every two hours for no reason at all.

GOOD morning, ladies and gentlemen, this is John Ardanyon bringing you the start of the third day of the 2050 Olympic War Games.

"And what a night it's been, ladies and gentlemen. In a mo-

ment we'll bring you the high lights of last night's action, but first here is Bill Carr to bring you up to date on the vital statistics."

"Thank you, John. Folks, we're happy to say that in the last few hours the early trend of the night's action has been reversed and the American team once again has a substantial lead. Squads five and six were wiped out in an early evening engagement in the mid-eastern sector, but they gave a good account of themselves. The Russians lost eleven men and a light machine gun in their efforts to get this thorn out of their side. And I'm happy to say the American light machine gun carried by squad six was successfully destroyed before the squad was over-run. But the big news this morning is the success of the American mortar and sniper squads. Our mortars accounted for six dead and two seriously wounded as opposed to only two killed and one wounded by the Russian mortars. Our sniper squad, working in two man teams, was successful in killing five men; whereas we only lost one man to enemy sniper action last night. We'll have a great shot coming up, folks, showing Private Cecil Harding from Plainview, New Jersey, killing a Russian captain in his sleep with nothing more than a sharp rock."

"Right, Bill, but before we show last night's high lights, I'm sure the folks would like to know that the score now stands forty-two fighting men for the American team as opposed to only thirty-seven for the Russians. Computer-wise that figures out to a 52.5 probability for the American team. I'm sure that probability figure would be higher if the Russians were not positioned on that central hill."

"And here now are the high spots of the night's action . . ."

ON the morning of the third day, word was spread that the American general had been killed. Private Richard Starbuck did not care. He realized now that good generalship was not going to preserve his life. So far chance seemed the only decisive factor. The mortar fire grew heavier, and the word was given to prepare for an attack on the hill. He gripped his rifle, and as he waited, he hoped they would come. He wanted to see, to face his enemy. He wanted to feel again that man had the power to control his own destiny.

A few minutes after noon it began to rain, a chilling spring rain that drizzled slowly and soaked in next to the skin. The enemy mortar ceased firing. The man in the fox hole next to his was laughing somewhat hysterically and claiming he had count-

ed the Russian mortar fire and that they had now exploded eight hundred of their thousand rounds. It seemed improbable; nevertheless Private Starbuck heard the story spread from fox hole to fox hole and presently he even began to believe it himself.

Toward evening, the sun came out briefly, and the mortars commenced firing again. This time, however, the shells landed on the far side of the hill. There was an answering fire from the American mortar although it seemed a senseless duel when neither gunner could get a fix on the other. The duel continued after night-fall, and then, suddenly, there was silence from the American sector. In a few minutes, his worst fears were confirmed when a runner brought orders to fall back to new positions. An unhappy chance round had knocked out the American mortar.

There were five men left in his squad. They managed to withdraw from the south slope of the hill without further losses. Their new general, Captain Paulson, had a meeting of his surviving officers in Private Starbuck's hearing. The situation was not good, but before going into purely defensive positions, two things must be accomplished. The enemy machine gun and mortar must be destroyed. Squads seven and eight who had been in reserve for a time and

who had suffered the fewest casualties were assigned the task. It must be done tonight. If the enemy's heavy weapons could be destroyed while the Americans still maintained possession of their remaining light machine gun, their position would be favorable. Otherwise their chances were fading. The mortar shells for the now useless American mortar were to be destroyed immediately to prevent their possible use by the enemy. And, the general added almost as an after thought, at sunrise the second squad will attack and take the central hill. They would be supported by the light machine gun if, by then, the enemy mortar had been put out of action. Questions? There were many, but none were asked.

COLONEL Bullock, this is an unusual development. Would you tell us what General Paulson has in mind?"

"Well, Bill, I think it must be pretty obvious even to the men in the field that the loss of the American mortar has drastically changed the situation. An unfortunate occurrence, unfortunate indeed. The probability report is now only 37.6 in favor of the American team. Of course, General Paulson doesn't have a computer, but I imagine he's arrived at pretty much the same conclusion.

"The two squads—seven and eight, I believe—which you see on your screens are undoubtedly being sent out in a desperation attempt—no, not desperation—in a courageous attempt to destroy the enemy mortar and light machine gun. It's a good move. I approve. Of course, you won't find this one in the books, but the fact is that at this stage of the game, the pre-determined battle plans are of ever-decreasing importance."

"General Vorsilov?"

"The Americans are doing the only thing they can do, Mr. Carr, but it's only a question of time now. You can rest assured that the Russian team will be alert to this very maneuver."

"Well, stand by, folks. This is still anybody's game. The games are not over yet—not by a long shot. Don't go away. This could be the key maneuver of the games. John?"

"While we're waiting, Bill, I'm sure the folks would like to hear a list of the new records which have already been set in this fifth meeting between the United States and Russia in the Olympic War Games. Our first record came early in the games when the American fifth and sixth squads startled the world with a brilliant demonstration of fire power and shattering the old mark set back in 2042 by killing seven men in just. . . ."

ON the morning of the fifth day Private Starbuck moved out as the point man for the assault on the central hill. He had trained on a replica of the hill hundreds of times, and he knew it as well as he knew the back of his own hand. Squad seven had knocked out the enemy mortar last night, so they had the support of their own light machine gun for at least part of the way. Squad eight had failed in their mission and had been killed to the last man. Private Starbuck only hoped the Russian machine gun was not in position to fire on the assault team.

At first it was like maneuvers. Their own machine gun delivered a blistering fire twenty yards ahead of them and the five squad members themselves fired from the hip as they advanced. There was only occasional and weak counterfire. They were eight yards from the top, and he was beginning to hope that, by some miracle spawned by a grotesque god, they were going to make it. Then it came. Grenades came rolling down from above, and a sustained volley of rifle fire came red hot from the depths of hell. He was hit twice in the first volley. Once in the hip, again in the shoulder. He would have gotten up, would have tried to go forward, but Captain Collins fell dead on top of him and he could not. A grenade exploded

three feet away. He felt something jar his cheek and knew he had been hit again. Somehow it was enough. Now he could die. He had done enough. Blood ran down his face and into his left eye, but he made no attempt to wipe it away. He would surely die now. He hoped it would be soon.

* * *

"It doesn't look too good, folks. Not good at all. Colonel Bullock?"

"I'm afraid I have to agree, Bill. The American probability factor is down to 16.9, and right now I couldn't quarrel with the computer at all. The Russians still have sixteen fighting men, while the Americans are down to nine. The American team will undoubtedly establish a defense position around the light machine gun on the north hill, but with the Russians still in control of the central hill and still in possession of their own machine gun, it appears pretty hopeless. Pretty hopeless indeed."

HE owed his life during the next few minutes to the fact that he was able to maintain consciousness. The firing had ceased all about him, and for a time he heard nothing, not even the sound of distant gun fire. This is death, he thought. Death is when you can't hear the guns any longer.

Then he heard the sound of boots. He picked out a spot in the sky and forced his eyes to remain on that spot. He wished to die in peace, and they might not let him die in peace. After a while the boots moved on.

He lost consciousness shortly after that. When he awoke, it was dark. He was not dead yet, for he could hear the sounds of guns again. Let them kill each other. He was out of it. It really was not such a bad way to die, if only it wouldn't take so long. He could tolerate the pain, but he hated the waiting.

While he waited, a strange thing happened. It was as though his spirit passed from his body and he could see himself lying there on the hill. Poor forlorn body to lie so long upon a hill. Would they write poems and sing songs about Private Richard Starbuck like they did four years ago for Sargeant Ernie Stevens. No, no poems for this lonely body lying on a hill waiting to die. Sargeant Stevens had killed six men before he died. So far as he knew he had killed none.

In the recruiting pamphlet they told you that your heirs would receive one hundred thousand dollars if you died in the games. Was that why he signed up? No, no he was willing to die now, but not for that. Surely he had had a better reason than that. Why had he done such a

crazy thing? Was it the chance to be a survivor? No, not that either. Suddenly he realized something the selection committee had known long ago: he had volunteered for no other reason than the fact there was a war to be fought, and he had not wanted to be left out.

He thought of the cameras next. Had they seen him on TV? Had all the girls, all the people in his home town been watching? Had his dad watched? Had Mr. and Mrs. Martin and their daughter watched? Had they seen him when he had drawn fire by changing fox holes? Were they watching now to see if he died well?

Toward morning, he began to wonder if he could hold out. There was only one thing left for him to do and that was to die as quietly and peacefully as possible. Yet it was not an easy thing to do, and now his wounds were beginning to hurt again. Twice he heard the boots pass nearby, and each time he had to fight back an impulse to call out to them so they could come hurry death. He did not do it. Some one might be watching and he wanted them to be proud of him.

At daybreak there was a wild flurry of rifle and machine gun fire, and then, suddenly, there was no sound, no movement, nothing but silence. Perhaps now he could die.

THE sad, dejected voice of Bill Carr was saying "... all over. It's all over, folks. We're waiting now for the lights to come on in the arena—the official signal that the games are over. It was close—but close only counts in horse shoes, as the saying goes. The American team made a fine last stand. They almost pulled it off. I make out only three Russian survivors, John. Is that right?"

"Just three, Bill, and one of those is wounded in the arm. Well, ladies and gentlemen, we had a very exciting finish. We're waiting now for the arena lights to come on. Wait a minute! Something's wrong! The lights are not coming on! I thought for a moment the official scorer was asleep at the switch. Bill, can you find out what the situation is? This damned computer still gives the American team a 1.4 probability factor."

"We've located it, John. Our sonic sound system has located a lone American survivor. Can you get the cameras on the central hill over there. There he is, folks. Our spotters in the booth have just identified him as Private Richard Starbuck from Centerville, Iowa. He seems badly wounded, but he's still alive. The question is: can he fight? He's not moving, but his heart is definitely beating and we know where there's life, there's hope."

"Right, Bill. And you can bet the three Russian survivors are a pretty puzzled group right now. They don't know what's happened. They can't figure out why the lights have not come on. Two minutes ago they were shouting and yelling a victory chant that now seems to have been premature. Ed, give us a camera on that north hill. Look at this, ladies and gentlemen. The three Russian survivors have gone berserk. Literally berserk—they are shooting and clubbing the bodies of the American dead. Don't go away, folks. . . ."

* * *

He began to fear he might not die. His wounds had lost their numbness and had begun to throb. He heard the sounds of guns and then of boots. Why wouldn't they leave him alone? Surely the war was over. He had nothing to do with them. One side or another had won—so why couldn't they leave him alone? The boots were coming closer, and he sensed that they would not leave him alone this time. A sudden rage mingled with his pain, and he knew he could lie there no longer. For the next few seconds he was completely and utterly insane. He pulled the pin on the grenade which had been pressing against his side and threw it blindly in the direction of the sound of the boots. With

an instinct gained in two years of intense training, he rolled to his belly and began to fire at the blurred forms below him. He did not stop firing even when the blurred shapes ceased to move. He did not stop firing until his rifle clicked on an empty chamber. Only then did he learn that the blurred shapes were Russian soldiers.

THEY healed his wounds. His shoulder would always be a little stiff, but his leg healed nicely leaving him without a trace of a limp. There was a jagged scar on his jaw, but they did wonders with plastic surgery these days and unless you knew it was there, you would hardly notice it. They put him through a two month reconditioning school, but it didn't take, of course. They gave him ticker tape parades, medals, and the keys to all the major cities. They warned him about the psychological dangers of being a survivor. They gave him case histories of other survivors—grim little anecdotes involving suicide, insanity, and various mental aberrations.

And then they turned him loose.

For a while he enjoyed the fruits of victory. Whatever he wanted he could have for the asking. Girls flocked around him, men respected him, governments honored him, and a group of

flunkies and hangers-on were willing enough to serve his every whim. He grew bored and returned to his home town.

It was not the same. He was not the same. When he walked down the streets, mothers would draw close to their daughters and hurry on past. If he shot pool, his old friends seemed aloof and played as if they were afraid to win. Only the shop keepers were glad to see him come in, for whatever he took, the government paid for. If he were to shoot the mayor's son, the government would pay for that too. At home his own mother would look at him with that guarded look in her eyes, and his dad was careful not to look him in the eyes at all.

He spent a lot of time in his room. He was not lonely. He had learned to live alone. He was sitting in his room one evening when he saw Cassandra, the Martin's fifteen year old daughter, coming home with some neighborhood kid from the early movie. He watched idly as the boy tried to kiss her goodnight. There was an awkwardness between them that was vaguely exciting. At last the boy succeeded in kissing her on the cheek, and then, apparently satisfied, went on home.

He sat there for a long time lighting one cigarette from the last one. There was a conflict inside his mind that once would have been resolved differently and probably with no conscious thought. Making up his mind, he stubbed his cigarette and went downstairs. His mother and father were watching TV. They did not look up as he walked out the front door. They never did any more.

The Martins were still up. Mr. Martin was tying brightly colored flies for his new fly rod and Mrs. Martin was reading. They both stiffened when he entered without knocking—alarm playing over their faces like a flickering fire light. He didn't pause, but walked on up stairs without looking at them.

Mrs. Martin got to her feet and stood looking up the stairway without moving. In her eyes there was the look of a jungle tiger who watches its mate pinned to a stake at the bottom of the pit. Mr. Martin sat staring at the brightly colored flies on his lap. For a moment there was silence. Then a girl's shrill screams announced to the Martins that war's reality was also for the very young.

THE END

Over the River and Through the Woods

By CLIFFORD D. SIMAK

THE two children came trudging down the lane in apple-canning time, when the first goldenrods were blooming and the wild asters large in bud. They looked, when she first saw them, out the kitchen window, like children who were coming home from school, for each of them was carrying a bag in which might have been their books. Like Charles and James, she thought, like Alice and Maggie—but the time when those four had trudged the lane on their daily trips to school was in the distant past. Now they had children of their own who made their way to school.

She turned back to the stove to stir the cooking apples, for which the wide-mouthed jars stood waiting on the table, then once more looked out the kitchen window. The two of them were closer now and she could see that the

boy was the older of the two—ten, perhaps, and the girl no more than eight.

They might be going past, she thought, although that did not seem too likely, for the lane led to this farm and to nowhere else.

They turned off the lane before they reached the barn and came sturdily trudging up the path that led to the house. There was no hesitation in them; they knew where they were going.

She stepped to the screen door of the kitchen as they came onto the porch and they stopped before the door and stood looking up at her.

The boy said: "You are our grandma. Papa said we were to say at once that you were our grandma."

"But that's not . . .," she said, and stopped. She had been about to say it was impossible, that she was not their grandma. And,

Once again Hugo-winner Cliff Simak demonstrates his rare ability to combine the science of the future with the commonplace of now; the time machine and the Mason jars for canning fruit; the threat and the promise.

looking down into the sober, childish faces, she was glad that she had not said the words.

"I am Ellen," said the girl, in a piping voice.

"Why, that is strange," the woman said. "That is my name, too."

The boy said, "My name is Paul."

She pushed open the door for them and they came in, standing silently in the kitchen, looking all about them as if they'd never seen a kitchen.

"It's just like Papa said," said Ellen. "There's the stove and the churn and . . ."

The boy interrupted her. "Our name is Forbes," he said.

This time the woman couldn't stop herself. "Why, that's impossible," she said. "That is our name, too."

The boy nodded solemnly. "Yes, we knew it was."

"Perhaps," the woman said, "you'd like some milk and cookies."

"Cookies!" Ellen squealed, delighted.

"We don't want to be any trouble," said the boy. "Papa said we were to be no trouble."

"He said we should be good," piped Ellen.

"I am sure you will be," said the woman, "and you are no trouble."

In a little while, she thought, she'd get it straightened out.

She went to the stove and set the kettle with the cooking apples to one side, where they would simmer slowly.

"Sit down at the table," she said. "I'll get the milk and cookies."

SHE glanced at the clock, ticking on the shelf. Four o'clock, almost. In just a little while the

men would come in from the fields. Jackson Forbes would know what to do about this; he had always known.

They climbed up on two chairs and sat there solemnly, staring all about them, at the ticking clock, at the wood stove with the fire glow showing through its draft, at the wood piled in the wood box, at the butter churn standing in the corner.

They set their bags on the floor beside them, and they were strange bags, she noticed. They were made of heavy cloth or canvas, but there were no drawstrings or no straps to fasten them. But they were closed, she saw, despite no straps or strings.

"Do you have some stamps?" asked Ellen.

"Stamps?" asked Mrs. Forbes.

"You must pay no attention to her," said Paul. "She should not have asked you. She asks everyone and Mama told her not to."

"But stamps?"

"She collects them. She goes around snitching letters that other people have. For the stamps on them, you know."

"Well, now," said Mrs. Forbes, "there may be some old letters. We'll look for them later on."

She went into the pantry and got the earthen jug of milk and filled a plate with cookies from the jar. When she came back they were sitting there sedately, waiting for the cookies.

"We are here just for a little while," said Paul. "Just a short vacation. Then our folks will come and get us and take us back again."

Ellen nodded her head vigorously. "That's what they told us when we went. When I was afraid to go."

"You were afraid to go?"

"Yes. It was all so strange."

"There was so little time," said Paul. "Almost none at all. We had to leave so fast."

"And where are you from?" asked Mrs. Forbes.

"Why," said the boy, "just a little ways from here. We walked just a little ways and of course we had the map. Papa gave it to us and he went over it carefully with us. . . ."

"You're sure your name is Forbes?"

Ellen bobbed her head. "Of course it is," she said.

"Strange," said Mrs. Forbes. And it was more than strange, for there were no other Forbes in the neighborhood except her children and her grandchildren and these two, no matter what they said, were strangers.

They were busy with the milk and cookies and she went back to the stove and set the kettle with the apples back on the front again, stirring the cooking fruit with a wooden spoon.

"Where is Grandpa?" Ellen asked.

"Grandpa's in the field. He'll be coming in soon. Are you finished with your cookies?"

"All finished," said the girl.

"Then we'll have to set the table and get the supper cooking. Perhaps you'd like to help me."

Ellen hopped down off the chair. "I'll help," she said.

"And I," said Paul, "will carry in some wood. Papa said I should be helpful. He said I could carry in the wood and feed the chickens and hunt the eggs and . . ."

"Paul," said Mrs. Forbes, "it might help if you'd tell me what your father does."

"Papa," said the boy, "is a temporal engineer."

II

THE two hired men sat at the kitchen table with the checker board between them. The two older people were in the living room.

"You never saw the likes of it," said Mrs. Forbes. "There was this piece of metal and you pulled it and it ran along another metal strip and the bag came open. And you pulled it the other way and the bag was closed."

"Something new," said Jackson Forbes. "There may be many new things we haven't heard about, back here in the sticks. There are inventors turning out all sorts of things."

"And the boy," she said, "has the same thing on his trousers.

I picked them up from where he threw them on the floor when he went to bed and I folded them and put them on the chair. And I saw this strip of metal, the edges jagged-like. And the clothes they wear. That boy's trousers are cut off above his knees and the dress that the girl was wearing was so short. . . ."

"They talked of plains," mused Jackson Forbes, "but not the plains we know. Something that is used, apparently, for folks to travel in. And rockets—as if there were rockets every day and not just on the Earth."

"We couldn't question them, of course," said Mrs. Forbes. "There was something about them, something that I sensed."

Her husband nodded. "They were frightened, too."

"You are frightened, Jackson?"

"I don't know," he said, "but there are no other Forbes. Not close, that is. Charlie is the closest and he's five miles away. And they said they walked just a little piece."

"What are you going to do?" she asked. "What can we do?"

"I don't rightly know," he said. "Drive in to the county seat and talk with the sheriff, maybe. These children must be lost. There must be someone looking for them."

"But they don't act as if they're lost," she told him. "They knew

they were coming here. They knew we would be here. They told me I was their grandma and they asked after you and they called you Grandpa. And they are so sure. They don't act as if we're strangers. They've been told about us. They said they'd stay just a little while and that's the way they act. As if they'd just come for a visit."

"I think," said Jackson Forbes, "that I'll hitch up Nellie after breakfast and drive around the neighborhood and ask some questions. Maybe there'll be someone who can tell me something."

"The boy said his father was a temporal engineer. That just don't make sense. Temporal means the worldly power and authority and . . ."

"It might be some joke," her husband said. "Something that the father said in jest and the son picked up as truth."

"I think," said Mrs. Forbes, "I'll go upstairs and see if they're asleep. I left their lamps turned low. They are so little and the house is strange to them. If they are asleep, I'll blow out the lamps."

Jackson Forbes grunted his approval. "Dangerous," he said, "to keep lights burning of the night. Too much chance of fire."

III

THE boy was asleep, flat upon his back—the deep and heal-

thy sleep of youngsters. He had thrown his clothes upon the floor when he had undressed to go to bed, but now they were folded neatly on the chair, where she had placed them when she had gone into the room to say good-night.

The bag stood beside the chair and it was open, the two rows of jagged metal gleaming dully in the dim glow of the lamp. Within its shadowed interior lay the dark forms of jumbled possessions, disorderly and helter-skelter, no way for a bag to be.

She stooped and picked up the bag and set it on the chair and reached for the little metal tab to close it. At least, she told herself, it should be closed and not left standing open. She grasped the tab and it slid smoothly along the metal tracks and then stopped, its course obstructed by an object that stuck out.

She saw it was a book and reached down to rearrange it so she could close the bag. And as she did so, she saw the title in its faint gold lettering across the leather backstrap—Holy Bible.

With her fingers grasping the book, she hesitated for a moment, then slowly drew it out. It was bound in an expensive black leather that was dulled with age. The edges were cracked and split and the leather worn from long usage. The gold edging of the leaves was faded.

Hesitantly, she opened it and there, upon the fly leaf, in old and faded ink, was the inscription:

To Sister Ellen
from Amelia

Oct. 30, 1896

Many Happy Returns of the
Day

She felt her knees grow weak and she let herself carefully to the floor and there, crouched beside the chair, read the fly leaf once again.

Oct. 30, 1896—that was her birthday, certainly, but it had not come as yet, for this was only the beginning of September, 1896.

And the Bible—how old was this Bible she held within her hands? A hundred years, perhaps, more than a hundred years.

A Bible, she thought—exactly the kind of gift Amelia would give her. But a gift that had not been given yet, one that could not be given, for that day upon the fly leaf was a month into the future.

It couldn't be, of course. It was some kind of stupid joke. Or some mistake. Or a coincidence, perhaps. Somewhere else someone else was named Ellen and also had a sister who was named Amelia and the date was a mistake—someone had written the wrong year. It would be an easy thing to do.

But she was not convinced.

They had said the name was Forbes and they had come straight here and Paul had spoken of a map so they could find the way.

Perhaps there were other things inside the bag. She looked at it and shook her head. She shouldn't pry. It had been wrong to take the Bible out.

On Oct. 30 she would be fifty-nine—an old farm-wife with married sons and daughters and grandchildren who came to visit her on week-end and on holidays. And a sister Amelia who, in this year of 1896, would give her a Bible as a birthday gift.

HER hands shook as she lifted the Bible and put it back into the bag. She'd talk to Jackson when she went down stairs. He might have some thought upon the matter and he'd know what to do.

She tucked the book back into the bag and pulled the tab and the bag was closed. She set it on the floor again and looked at the boy upon the bed. He still was fast asleep, so she blew out the light.

In the adjoining room little Ellen slept, baby-like, upon her stomach. The low flame of the turned-down lamp flickered gustily in the breeze that came through an open window.

Ellen's bag was closed and stood squared against the chair

with a sense of neatness. The woman looked at it and hesitated for a moment, then moved on around the bed to where the lamp stood on a bedside table.

The children were asleep and everything was well and she'd blow out the light and go downstairs and talk with Jackson, and perhaps there'd be no need for him to hitch up Nellie in the morning and drive around to ask questions of the neighbors.

As she leaned to blow out the lamp, she saw the envelope upon the table, with the two large stamps of many colors affixed to the upper right-hand corner.

Such pretty stamps, she thought—I never saw so pretty. She leaned closer to take a look at them and saw the country name upon them. Israel. But there was no such actual place as Israel. It was a Bible name, but there was no country. And if there were no country, how could there be stamps?

She picked up the envelope and studied the stamp, making sure that she had seen right. Such a pretty stamp!

She collects them, Paul had said. She's always snitching letters that belong to other people.

The envelope bore a postmark, and presumably a date, but it was blurred and distorted by a hasty, sloppy cancellation and she could not make it out.

The edge of a letter sheet stuck

a quarter inch out of the ragged edges where the envelope had been torn open and she pulled it out, gasping in her haste to see it while an icy fist of fear was clutching at her heart.

It was, she saw, only the end of a letter, the last page of a letter, and it was in type rather than in longhand—type like one saw in a newspaper or a book.

Maybe one of those new-fangled things they had in big city offices, she thought, the ones she'd read about. Typewriters—was that what they were called?

do not believe, the one page read, your plan is feasible. There is no time. The aliens are closing in and they will not give us time.

And there is the further consideration of the ethics of it, even if it could be done. We can not, in all conscience, scurry back into the past and visit our problems upon the people of a century ago. Think of the problems it would create for them, the economic confusion and the psychological effect.

If you feel that you must, at least, send the children back, think a moment of the wrench it will give those two good souls when they realize the truth. Theirs is a smug and solid world—sure and safe and sound. The concepts of this mad century would destroy all they have, all that they believe in.

But I suppose I cannot pre-

sume to counsel you. I have done what you asked. I have written you all I know of our old ancestors back on that Wisconsin farm. As historian of the family, I am sure my facts are right. Use them as you see fit and God have mercy on us all.

Your loving brother,
Jackson

P.S. A suggestion. If you do send the children back, you might send along with them a generous supply of the new cancer-inhibitor drug. Great-great-grandmother Forbes died in 1904 of a condition that I suspect was cancer. Given those pills, she might survive another ten or twenty years. And what, I ask you, brother, would that mean to this tangled future? I don't pretend to know. It might save us. It might kill us quicker. It might have no effect at all. I leave the puzzle to you.

If I can finish up work here and get away, I'll be with you at the end.

Mechanically she slid the letter back into the envelope and laid it upon the table beside the flaring lamp.

Slowly she moved to the window that looked out on the empty lane.

They will come and get us, Paul had said. But would they ever come? Could they ever come?

She found herself wishing they would come. Those poor people,

those poor frightened children caught so far in time.

Blood of my blood, she thought, flesh of my flesh, so many years away. But still her flesh and blood, no matter how removed. Not only these two beneath this roof tonight, but all those others who had not come to her.

The letter had said 1904 and cancer and that was eight years away—she'd be an old, old woman then. And the signature had been Jackson—an old family name, she wondered, carried on and on, a long chain of people who bore the name of Jackson Forbes?

She was stiff and numb, she knew. Later she'd be frightened. Later she would wish she had not read the letter, did not know.

But now she must go back downstairs and tell Jackson the best way that she could.

She moved across the room and blew out the light and went out into the hallway.

A voice came from the open door beyond.

"Grandma, is that you?"

"Yes, Paul," she answered. "What can I do for you?"

In the doorway she saw him crouched beside the chair, in the shaft of moonlight pouring through the window, fumbling at the bag.

"I forgot," he said. "There was something papa said I was to give you right away."

THE END



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YARDSTICKS IN SPACE

By
BEN BOVA

Everyone knows that Alpha Centauri is 4.3 lightyears distant from Earth. But how do we know we know it. Here expert Ben Bova summarizes the state of our ability to measure the Cosmos—and predicts future possibilities.

THE Greeks certainly had the words for it, but it was a canny Italian who thought of using numbers and turned ancient philosophy into pragmatic science. Perhaps Galileo's greatest contribution to human thought was his insistence on measurement. Idle speculation ends when you bring a yardstick into the argument.

Measurement is the heart of science. In astronomy, distance measurements are the foundation upon which rests almost all our knowledge. For example: An astronomer sees a star in the night sky and notes its apparent brightness. But how much light is the star actually putting out, what is its intrinsic luminosity?

This cannot be determined until the distance to the star is known. And unless the star's real luminosity is known, not even the greatest astronomer can learn anything about the star's evolutionary history.

Before suitable distance measurements could be made, for instance, it was impossible to decide if the great spiral nebulae (such as the one in Andromeda) were clouds within our own Milky Way galaxy or were distant galaxies in their own right. Even today, our knowledge of the size and age of the universe itself depends on the yardsticks used to measure the distances of the farthest galaxies.

How can you measure the dis-

tance to a star, or to the farthest reaches of the known universe? You begin with a triangle.

George Washington knew how to measure the distance to an object he couldn't touch. He could measure the width of a river with his surveyor's baseline and telescope. First he would measure out a baseline. Then he would sight an object on the farther riverbank—a tree, perhaps—from each end of the baseline, and measure the angles formed by the ends of the baseline and the tree. Thus George could construct on paper a triangle in which he knew the length of the base, and the size of two of the three angles. Simple trigonometry would tell him the length of the other two legs of the triangle, or the length of a line drawn from the tree perpendicular to the baseline—said line being the actual width of the river, or very nearly.

Interplanetary Distances

IF Washington had been inclined toward astronomy rather than politics, he could probably have made accurate measurements of the distances to the Moon and the planets. For these problems, astronomers simply use longer baselines—hundreds, even thousands, of miles long. This is necessary because they are dealing with distances literally out of this world.

The longer the baseline, the larger and more easily-measured are the angles formed at each end of the base with the target.

But there are two other ways to get interplanetary distances, both of them rather slick when compared to the exacting triangulation method. First is the geometric method. With it, it is not too difficult to draw a map of the solar system even if none of the distances between planets are known. This may sound odd, but it's been done for centuries. All the orbits of the major planets and their satellites can be plotted quite nicely, without knowing any distances at all. For example: Venus is never seen more than 45° away from the Sun. You can draw a circle of any size to represent the Earth's orbit, with the Sun as the center. Pick a spot on the circle to represent the Earth's position, and connect the Earth and Sun with a line. Measure off 45° angles both above and below the line. Draw a circle inside the 90° angle thus formed, with its center on the Sun. That's the orbit of Venus. If you measure the circles, you'll find that Venus' orbit is about 0.7 times the radius of Earth's orbit. You don't have any idea of the miles or kilometers involved, but you do have the *geometric relationship* between the two planets.

The same tactics can be ap-

plied to every planet, giving a fine map of the solar system. But it is a map without a scale. To get the scale, at least one distance has to be measured. Once a single measurement is made, though, *all* the distances fall neatly into place.

The standard unit of distance for solar system work is the Astronomical Unit. It is defined as the mean distance between the Earth and Sun. Measuring the distance to the Sun directly, to determine the Astronomical Unit (or AU), is a difficult proposition. The Sun's glare, and the lack of permanent markings to serve as a target for the measurement, cause grave complications. So the AU is usually measured indirectly, by the geometrical relationship technique. (In 1931 astronomers all over the world cooperated in measuring the distance and orbit of the planetoid Eros, which spiralled to within nearly 15 million miles of Earth. With Eros' orbit firmly known, and its distance at any given time established, the whole scale of the solar system—and the value of the AU—gained a new precision.)

Since 1950 radar has taken an important role in determining distances to the nearer planets. Both the U.S. and Russia have made radar measurements of Venus' distance, and refined the definition of the AU down to

92,956,200 \pm 200 miles (as of 1962). In 1963 a group of MIT researchers bounced a laser beam off the Moon. Laser measurements, using visible light instead of longer-wavelength radar or radio waves, hold the promise of even more accurate measurements.

Parallax: the Long Triangle

THE triangulation system that works so well within the solar system is also used for the stars. But here its success is limited. Indeed, although the possibilities of triangulation measurements for stellar distances have been known since Copernicus' time, it was not until 1838 that Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel of Prussia made the first successful measurement. The reason is simple: sheer distance. No baseline on Earth is long enough for stellar distance measurements. But astronomers are an ingenious lot, and have turned to an astronomical baseline: the diameter of the Earth's orbit around the Sun, which is some 186 million miles long.

But even it is barely long enough. The technique for stellar triangulation is to observe the star at six-month intervals—that is, from opposite ends of the baseline. Hopefully the target star will show a slight shift of position in reference to the other stars around it. This de-

pende on the target star being near enough to show a measurable shift, and the background stars being far enough to remain fixed in position. Many an astronomer has spent a couple of heartbreaking years trying to measure the distance to a star that was just too far away to show any shift at all.

The "slight shift" of the star's position is called the *parallactic* shift. You can produce a parallactic shift for yourself by holding your thumb up at arms length and squinting at it with one eye at a time. Your thumb will seem to move in relation to the background you see it against. The word parallax is of Greek origin, meaning "the mutual inclination of two lines forming an angle." (The Greeks really did have a word for everything!)

The parallactic shift measured by Bessel was for the star 61 Cygni, which shows a shift of 0.294 second of arc. One second of arc is about the size of a twenty-five cent piece, seen from three miles away. The distance of 61 Cygni is 11.1 lightyears. The distance to Alpha Centauri wasn't measured until respectable telescopes were set up in the southern hemisphere. Alpha Centauri's parallactic shift is 0.76 second of arc—corresponding to a distance of 4.3 lightyears. Bessel's measurement,

incidentally, is comparable to measuring an 11-mile distance from a baseline of one inch. Quite a trick!

Parallactic shifts are time-consuming and tedious, but they are the only direct method of measuring a star's distance. And "direct" is a relative term; the whole system depends on the accuracy of the Astronomical Unit, which is why astronomers are always trying to refine their estimates of the AU. Worse still, the trigonometric parallax method works for only a handful of the very nearest stars: only a few hundred of the 100 billion stars in the Milky Way. Astronomers are thus almost in the position of a man who can measure only those objects within the span of his arms!

But not quite.

Although direct measurements for stars greater than about 100 lightyears away are now impossible, astronomers have several other tricks up their sleeves. For example: the Sun is boring through space at the rate of 4.2 AU each year, dragging the Earth and the rest of the solar system along with it. Each year, then, the Earth travels twice the span of its 2-AU orbital diameter. Moreover, this 4.2-AU annual baseline grows with time; in 10 years, it's 42 AU. Astronomers have used this type of baseline

to estimate the distances to large groups of stars.

The system won't work for a single star, because it, too, is moving across the sky in its own orbit. It refuses to stand still while we measure it. For a large sampling of stars, though, astronomers can assume that the individual motion of any one star is cancelled out by an opposite motion of another star in the group. By picking out a large sampling of stars that all have the same apparent brightness and color (and hence would probably be at approximately the same distance from us) a *mean parallax* value can be measured, and the average distance to the entire group established reasonably well.

Mileposts in the Sky

IT wasn't until the twentieth century that astronomers realized there were actual mileposts in the heavens waiting for man to make use of them. Not that there was anything subtle about the mileposts: they blaze with the light of a thousand Suns, and even wink on and off! The mileposts are certain types of variable stars, called Cepheid variables and RR Lyrae variables, after the cryptic astronomical jargon.

RR Lyrae stars are strictly telescopic objects. But Delta Cephei, the prototype Cepheid

variable, can be seen by the unaided eye as a fourth-magnitude star in the constellation Cepheus, between Cassiopeia and Cygnus. A more prominent Cepheid is Polaris, the North Star. But don't expect to see any changes in brightness without some professional equipment. Polaris fluctuates about a tenth of a magnitude every four nights: a glaring phenomenon for the astronomers, but impossible to detect with the naked eye.

There are many types of variable stars in the heavens, but what makes the Cepheids and RR Lyrae stars important is the extreme regularity of their brightness fluctuations. The time interval between one peak of brightness and the next is precisely the same for any given star of this type. The American astronomer Edward Barnard claimed that if all the clocks on Earth stopped he could tell time by a certain Cepheid variable he had studied for years, so exact was its pulsation period. Both the Cepheids and the RR Lyrae stars are very luminous stars, and can therefore be seen over truly immense distances. The Cepheids tend to be the brighter, averaging several thousand times the Sun's luminosity. The pulsation period of Cepheids run from several days to several weeks; periods of the RR Lyrae

variables are usually under one day.

What has all this to do with distance measurements?

Well, if you can determine a star's actual brightness—its intrinsic luminosity—and then compare it to its apparent brightness as seen from Earth, you can determine its distance. The difference between apparent and actual brightness depends on the distance. However, for most stars the actual luminosity can only be determined once the distance is known. Thus: impasse. This is where the Cepheids and RR Lyrae variable come in. For astronomers have learned to gauge their actual luminosities—and hence their distances—simply by timing their pulsations.

The Cepheid Story

IN 1910 Miss Henrietta Leavitt of Harvard College Observatory began studying some 1700 variable stars that had recently been photographed in the Magellanic Clouds, those two "satellite" galaxies of the Milky Way some 150,000 lightyears from the Sun. (Although at that time their distance was not known.) She discovered that for Cepheid variables, the longer the period of pulsation—the time from one peak of brightness to the next—the brighter was the star's apparent magnitude. For example,

a Cepheid with a period of 100 days was three magnitudes brighter, over-all, than a 10-day Cepheid.

Ejnar Hertzsprung (Netherlands) and Harlow Shapley (U.S.) seized on this information and made an all-important simplifying assumption. They assumed that the Cepheids in the Magellanic Clouds were, to all intents and purposes, all at the same distance from Earth. Obviously they are not, but since the Clouds as a whole are so distant from us individual differences from one star to the next are negligibly small. This is like saying that everyone in Hawaii is at the same distance from San Francisco; it's not quite true, but it is close enough.

The importance of the Hertzsprung-Shapley assumption was this: it eliminated the effect of distance on the period-luminosity relationship of the Cepheids. It meant that the real luminosity of a Cepheid changed with its period of pulsation. In other words, astronomers could now say that all 100-day Cepheids are three magnitudes brighter than all 10-day Cepheids. Anywhere in the universe! Regardless of how dim or bright the Cepheids might appear from Earth, their actual luminosity could now be determined by timing their pulsations.

The astronomers now had a

scale that allowed them to rate the relative luminosities of these variable stars. If they could put a distance value to the scale—by getting the distance to any Cepheid, anywhere, of any brightness—then they could determine the distance of all observable Cepheids merely by timing them.

With Shapley leading the way, the distances to several RR Lyrae stars and Cepheid variables were estimated by the mean parallax method (they are all much too distant for trigonometric parallax). The distances are not perfectly accurate, as we shall soon see, but they were good enough to allow astronomers to begin measuring the size of the Milky Way and the universe beyond.

The Galactic Yardstick

THE Cepheids proved to be a key tool in understanding the physical structure of the universe. In fairly quick order it was established that the Sun is off to one edge of the Milky Way, and that the galaxy's center is some 30,000 lightyears from us. The spiral "nebulae," thought by many astronomers to belong to the Milky Way, turned out to be separate galaxies, each containing billions of stars, distant from us by millions of lightyears.

Cepheids are so bright that

they can be seen in some of the nearer galaxies, including the great spiral in Andromeda. By timing the Cepheids there, it was at first concluded that the Andromeda spiral was 750,000 lightyears away. In 1950, Walter Baade of Mt. Palomar Observatory discovered that the type of Cepheid used to calculate the distance to Andromeda was actually more than four times brighter than had been assumed. This meant that the spiral galaxy was more than twice as far away—its distance is now given as about two million lightyears.

There are enough galaxies within reach of the Cepheid technique to allow astronomers to set up a rough sort of brightness index for galaxies. Galaxies that are too far off to permit individual stars to be resolved—even the ultra-luminous Cepheids—are gauged on an over-all brightness scale. This assumes that all spiral galaxies, for example, have the same total intrinsic luminosity. A fainter spiral is therefore farther away than a brighter one, and the difference between their apparent brightnesses can be used as a rough estimate of their distances.

There is one type of star that is even brighter than a Cepheid, and thus can be seen over even greater distances—a supernova.

These cataclysmic explosions of stars are rare by human standards: about once every 500 years in a single galaxy. But with billions of galaxies within reach of our telescopes, supernovae can be observed fairly often. While the Cepheids have a regular timing mechanism that allows them to be used as mileposts, supernovae evidently all blaze forth at about the same intensity. When an astronomer sees a supernova, then, he assumes that its intrinsic luminosity is the same as all supernovae (to within a few percent), and that its apparent brightness is a function of its distance.

To the Edge of the Universe

IN the 1920's astronomers discovered that the farther galaxies are apparently moving away from the Milky Way at speeds that increase with distance. The American, Edwin P. Hubble, showed that the galaxies are moving away in a smooth and predictable manner. The universe, therefore, seems to be expanding.

The expanding-universe conclusion is drawn from the red-shift of the spectra taken of the distant galaxies. Without going into the details of spectroscopy, we can simply say that when a luminous object is moving away from us, its spectrum is shifted toward the red. A spectrum

shifted toward the blue shows that the object is approaching. This is nothing more than a Doppler effect, similar to the familiar change in pitch of a train whistle as it first approaches, and then fades off into the distance. The faster a galaxy is moving away from us, Hubble and others concluded, the farther distant it is from Earth. Thus the amount of red-shift in the galaxy's spectrum can be used as an indication of its distance.

To date, the farthest object to be definitely recorded is the radio source 3C 147 (the 3C stands for the Third Cambridge Catalogue of strong radio sources in the heavens). Radio-telescopes first picked up 3C 147. The 200-inch Mt. Palomar telescope, directed by the radio findings, has recorded a pinpoint of light that looks like an individual star in our own galaxy. However, 3C 147 shows a red-shift that indicates it is receding from the Milky Way at nearly half the speed of light. Its distance, then, is estimated to be between 5 and 10 billion lightyears.

And there we stand. From the surveyor's triangle to the edge of the known universe. And no end yet in sight.

It may sound slightly presumptuous to call some of these techniques "measurements." Clearly, the timing of a star's pulsation or the estimation of a

galaxy's luminosity is not a direct measurement of distance. All of our knowledge rests on slender threads of logic and induction. None of it is infallible, and a lot of it is little more than educated guesswork. No one knows this better than the astronomers themselves.

But in years to come, when astronomy breaks free of the Earth's surface and murky atmosphere, we may be able to make parallax measurements from opposite ends of the solar system, or see "milepost stars" in much more remote galaxies, or use the newly-emerging techniques of x-ray and ultraviolet astronomy to make better and farther-reaching distance measurements. In the meantime, an astronomer can only say, "It is better to use a candle (even though it may be inexactly calibrated) than to curse the darkness." ■

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The 23rd World Science Fiction Convention will be held in the Mount Royal Hotel, London from August 27th to 30th 1965. Guest of Honor will be Brian Aldiss. Membership fees are: 15 shillings or \$2.00 for non-attending members; 21 shillings or \$3.00 for attendees. The Treasurer is: James Groves, 29 Lathom Road, London. E6, England. U.S. Agent is: Bill Evans, Box 86, Mt. Rainier, Maryland.

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(Continued from page 6)

rotted away over the eons. Luckily, Beatrice's "thick, luxuriant hair" has grown while she slept, and now is "outspread all over and about her."

Even this cloak does not entirely hide her nudity, which perturbs Allan. "It won't do, you know," he tells her. "Got to have something to put on. Great Heavens, what a situation."

He offers her the ruins of his coat, but it falls to pieces. "Never mind," responds Beatrice "with quiet, modest dignity." She tells him that "my hair protects me very well for the present." Then she adds the last sensible statement to be heard in the book: "If you and I are all that's left of all the people in the world, this is no time for trifles."

It turns out that they *are* the only survivors—at least of the true-blue white folks. They find the world populated by hideous brutes, apish and distorted, which the author informs us appear to be Mongol or Negroid in ancestry. Our sturdy hero, naturally, reacts to the sight of one of these brutes by thinking: "What a target! At this distance, with my .38 I could drill it without half trying."

Somehow all white men are dead, you see, and naturally the black ones slid into evolutionary degeneration almost at once, sinking beneath the level of

Pithecanthropus. Understandably, Beatrice is shocked into hysteria by a single glimpse of the beasts, while Allan plots their extermination. "Worse than any troglodyte!" he expostulates.

He shoots a few, and before long they attack en masse. Allan is unable to repress his loathing for the creatures. "Seems as though malformed human members had been flung at random into a kaleidoscope, turned by a madman!" he whispers to Beatrice, who silently peers at them "in fascinated horror." (Editor Lowndes has expurgated that passage a bit, perhaps with an eye toward the NAACP. The original edition has: "Seems as though malformed human members, black and bestial, had been flung at random into a ghastly kaleidoscope. . . .")

Of course, the fair-skinned pair triumph, and the novel ends on their resolution to repeople the earth with godlings of their own stock. I suppose England's racist ideas can be accepted as quaint survivals of a bygone era, but his horrid prose and lame-brained plotting cannot. At \$2.95, this one seems a little too expensive to buy for laughs.

Dreadful, dreadful, dreadful. If this was considered a classic, what were some of the *bad* stories of the day like?

A Checklist of Science Fiction

Anthologies, compiled by Walter Cole. Introduction by Theodore Sturgeon. 374 pages. \$7.50.

Don't be misled by the title of this one. A "checklist" might seem to be a slim pamphlet listing the titles of a few hundred books, but this is a majestic volume, thick and sturdy, that will stand for a long time among the best bibliographical reference works the science fiction field has produced.

Cole has indexed and cross-indexed just about every s-f anthology ever published, including such obscure ones as *Adventures to Come*, vintage 1937, edited by one J. Berg Esenwein. The main body of the book goes through 1961, and a supplement, bound in, covers 1962 and 1963. There is a list of the anthologies alphabetically by titles, and one alphabetically by editors; the stories included are alphabetically arranged and also are grouped by their authors. Most remarkably, Cole has tracked down the original magazine appearance of each story, so that we can see at a glance that Murray Leinster's "First Contact" made its bow in the May, 1945 *Astounding* and subsequently appeared in four anthologies, for example.

All kinds of information can be mined from the book. Who has had the most stories anthologized? Asimov and Sturgeon,

followed by Leinster, Kuttner, del Rey, and other veterans. A. Bertram Chandler has had more stories anthologized than Hal Clement, 8 to 7, which seems odd until one reflects that Clement is basically a novelist. I was surprised to see that so-and-so had been in so many anthologies, and such-and-such in so few. (Silverberg, incidentally, comes out with seven appearances, one less than Cordwainer Smith but six more than George Allan England, author of the above-mentioned "classic.")

There are some errors in the book—only to be expected, with 2600 stories to handle. Mostly they stem from faulty cross-indexing, as when Don A. Stuart's "Forgetfulness" gets listed in the story index but not in the author index. Such slips that I've found are trivial and hardly detract from the enormous usefulness of this unique work. Future anthologists will have only themselves to blame if they fail to consult it before assembling their collections.

The volume is lithographed and sturdily bound in hard covers. I suspect it's being published at a loss, even at \$7.50. Mysteriously, Cole did not include his address anywhere on the book, but it can be ordered from him at 1171 East 8th Street, Brooklyn 30, N.Y., or from dealers in specialty s-f material.

The Worlds of Robert F. Young. Simon & Schuster, \$3.95. 163 pages.

I am not fond of the writing of Robert F. Young. My objections are not to his style, which is crisp and straightforward, nor to his sense of plot, which I find adequate enough. It's his his themes that bother me. Either Young is waxing sentimental over maiden ladies, or else he's waxing satiric over the cult of the automobile in American society. In one particularly awesome and archetypical Young story included in this collection, "Emily and the Bards Sublime," he manages to do both at once—a remarkable technical feat.

Though there's no hint of it on the copyright page, most of these stories first appeared in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. Some, like "A Drink of Darkness," are from *Fantastic*. A few may have come from the *Saturday Evening Post*, which has bought a number of Young's stories. The *Post* is the right place for them: Young is concerned with such slick preoccupations as romantic love, the cruelty of the world toward sensitive people, and the difficulties of being an Artist in a rude

world. His handling is slick too, always coasting over the surface of his ideas, adopting the line of least intellectual resistance, taking the most conventional road to the climax of a story.

That's how we get such heavy-handed stuff as "Romance in a Twenty-First Century Used-Car Lot" and "Little Red Schoolhouse." "Goddess in Granite," a potentially powerful story, is murdered by Young's soft-at-the-core approach. The obsession with automobiles reaches a frenzied, unpleasant pitch in "Your Ghost Will Walk." Some of the others are even more impossibly gooey.

The collection is not a complete disaster. Tucked away in it is a story called "The Courts of Jamshyd" which is a tight, hard, wholly unsentimental, wholly unforgettable little vignette. The rest of the book is not for me, though others—especially female readers—will probably appreciate Young's tenderness and sweetness. He's a Keats-and-Shelley man and I'm a Yeats-and-Eliot man, that's the whole trouble. He's also a natural-born slick writer who doesn't seem really comfortable within the tougher disciplines of true science fiction.



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(continued from page 77)

we would—for freedom." He added the "for freedom" to avoid further embarrassment.

Knox was kneeling on the floor, packing the food in his knapsack. He stopped packing and looked up at the two. "The price of freedom is always high," he said. "You must remember that. You—the very old and the very young—you are the ones who will have to pay for it most dearly, perhaps with your lives."

The old man had an arm around his wife's shoulders. He said, "Then we will."

Knox strapped his knapsack shut and rose. "You've been very generous," he said.

"Don't thank us again, if you don't want me to take it all back," laughed the man. Knox laughed, too. Then he left.

He smiled as he walked across the dunes away from the shack. That had been a good meal, with

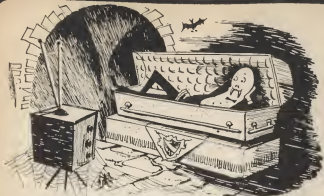
good people. He had enjoyed it.

In a few minutes he reached the four bodies. He stooped and picked up the rifle of one of the soldiers. The guns supplied by the nobles were much more accurate and powerful than those that Knox's men used.

Knox checked the rifle to make sure it was loaded. Then he went back to the shack and killed the old man and woman and the girl. After he had finished packing their food supply into several wooden crates he had found in the cellar, he went out again and began dragging the bodies of the soldiers to the shack. He would say he had caught the four by surprise after they had murdered the family for the food.

He drank the icewater sky with his eyes and grinned as he pulled a body up the side of a dune. His men knew how to make food last. They could make this food last for a week. **THE END**

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